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NEWS WORTH SHARING.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Metro looks at the stories that made the greatest impact on us, within our borders and beyond

Here came the flood Pages 4-8

A gaffe by any other name ... Page 14

Space oddity Page 16

Remembering Rehtaeh Page 21

Behold or forget, in TV and film Pages 39-40

2013

Flood cleanup

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Local

Metro Calgary reporters take a look at the stories that impacted them the most in 2013.

Readers' online selections

You told us — via our Metropolitan Panel — which stories affected you the most:

Frothiest

Selling $20 ice to flood victims

Gordy Marchant snapped a photo that quickly went viral of a Queensland Liquor Store in Calgary's southeast charging $20 for a bag of ice amid a rush by people to stock up on goods as floods ravaged Calgary.

METRO

Frothiest

Dog walker's racist comments

Anger raged online over a video in which a woman out walking her dogs in a northwest Calgary community clearly tells a neighbour, "Maybe you should go back to China where you belong." METRO

Proudest

Back Alley bids Cowtown adieu

Party-goers were dismayed to learn that after more than two decades, the popular Calgary nightclub the Back Alley quietly closed its doors.

METRO

Naheed Nenshi speaks to reporters outside city council chambers on Sept. 23, after revealing he had offered endorsements to all incumbent members of council ahead of the Oct. 21 municipal election. METRO FILE

Race of the slates

Mayor. Offer to endorse all incumbent members of council made race the Nenshi slate versus the home-builder slate

ROBSON FLETCHER
Metro reporter

No one expected Calgary's 2013 municipal election to carry the same excitement as the 2010 vote, but it turned out to be far more engaging than many initially predicted, and I can still remember the moment things went from sleepy to surprising.

It was the morning of Sept. 23. Nomination day. A three-hour frenzy as dozens of candidates made their way into city council chambers to file documents that would put their names on the ballots Calgarians would mark four weeks later.

Upon exiting the chambers, candidates were greeted by a buzzing throng of reporters and photographers, myself included. It was quite the free-for-all, with journalists shifting from one interview to another, every so often swarming a bigger-name candidate.

It just happened to be myself and a handful of other reporters — no TV cameras, just microphones — around incumbent Ald. Andre Chabot when he first revealed the information that would change the tone of the entire campaign.

Mayor Naheed Nenshi, Chabot informed us, had offered to endorse every incumbent member of council, throwing his tremendous popularity and brand recognition behind the campaigns of the typically lesser-known aldermen, some of whom were in for tough fights against experienced and well-financed challengers.

It was a stunning revelation. So much so that, despite trusting Chabot's word, I and my fellow newsies scrambled to find other incumbents for confirmation. Sure enough, they told the same story.

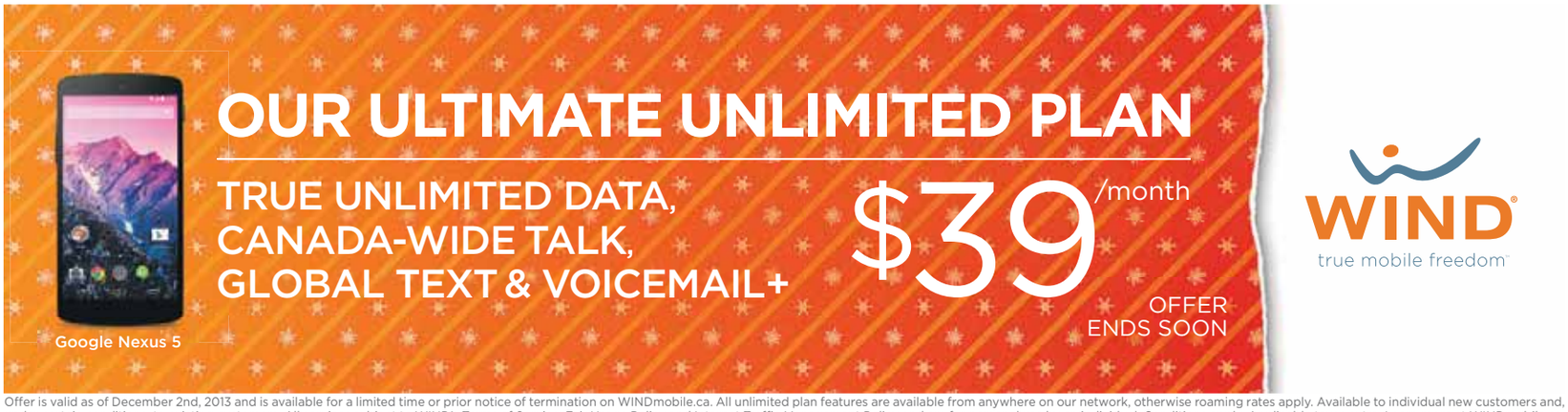
Then came the biggest swarm of the day, as Nenshi emerged from filing his nomination papers. The pack encircled him almost immediately.

Nenshi confirmed his offer, but insisted he wasn't creating a "slate." Rather, he insisted, it was an attempt to prevent a true slate of newcomers from taking over council, specifically one financed by some in the home-building industry, a group with whom Nenshi had been at odds since the leak of the infamous Cal Wenzel video earlier in the year.

That set the stage for the rest of the campaign. It's an oversimplification, sure, but the election became viewed as the "Nenshi slate" versus the "home-builder slate."

It made for a far more exciting race than most observers had expected, and that showed in the final voter turnout, which came in at 39.4 per cent.

Sure, a far cry from the 53.4 per cent turnout in 2010, but well above the low 20s that many had been predicting. And Calgarians' engagement in 2013, I have no doubt, traces directly back to that day outside council chambers.



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Reporter recounts harrowing trek across flooded-out highway

Stranded in Turner Valley. Highway 22, the only available road in and out at that point, was washed out near Millarville

BRYAN WEISMILLER
Metro reporter

Water flows passed vehicles in Bowness on June 21, a day that saw up to 100,000 people evacuated from their homes in Calgary. NATHAN DENETTE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Three-foot high water doesn't sound so bad until it becomes the barrier between reporting on Alberta's most costly natural disaster and spending the night in a two-bit town on a bunk assignment.

That was the case in Turner Valley on June 20, 2013, the first day of Flood 2013.

As few likely remember, there was much initial concern raised over a flood-related poisonous gas leak reported about 30 minutes south of Calgary.

Reporters, consequently, were dispatched to the scene.

It didn't take long to figure out the sour gas scare was a minor event in the day's grand narrative and the mission shifted to other inundated areas.

But by then, Highway 22 — the only available road in and out of Turner Valley — at that point was washed out near Millarville.

The water was roughly a metre deep and stretched for nearly 50 yards.

Safety-vest clad officials warned all drivers to stay clear of the watery blockade, but ultimately conceded they were powerless to stop anyone from attempting to forge the quick-rising stream.

Many turned back.

Given the choice of being safely stranded in Turner Valley or dangerously rejoining the news fray, the decision was easy.

"Hwy 22 is reminiscent of Oregon Trail. I've elected to caulk the wagon and float," came the official report filed to Twitter.

Halfway through the epic plunge, it became apparent my Chevy Blazer's power steering had given way to the current and it seemed increasingly likely the maiden voyage was bound for the ditch.

However, the mighty SUV cut through the water like a knife, the ripples lapping against its sides like it was Columbus' Santa Maria.

A primal cry was sounded as the vehicle lurched on to dry payment.

Let freedom ring!

Theatrics aside, it was a rather harrowing ordeal.

Seriously. No, seriously.

Navigating the waters

Safety-vest clad officials warned all drivers to stay clear of the watery blockade, but ultimately conceded they were powerless to stop anyone from attempting to forge the quick-rising stream. Many turned back.

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Inundated, eerily quiet downtown Calgary a lasting flood memory

Road-turned-river. Metro reporter recalls favourite photo of the flood-ravaged Saddledome

ROBSON FLETCHER
Metro reporter

Standing at a downtown street corner, thigh-deep in brown water, I snapped one of my favourite photos of the Calgary flood.

A man was walking east along 9 Avenue, passing beneath a powerless streetlight at 4 Street S.E., with the underpass behind him almost unrecognizable as it was filled to its ceiling with floodwater. He was carrying a backpack and looking down as he trudged through the road-turned-river, with the flood-ravaged Saddledome in the background.

The image, to me, summed up just how far Calgary's rivers had encroached into the heart of the city.

Then I realized I had better get the heck out of there.

The penny dropped when another downtown wader came up from behind me to show me his own photo, one he had taken on his iPhone just a couple hours earlier, in the same spot. It showed the same underpass, with nearly two metres less water in it.

"It's filling up fast," he said.

I had heard on the radio that the river levels had begun receding by this point, but I quickly realized water was still making its way to the low-lying East Village area, and the once thigh-deep water was now making its way to my waist.

So I made my way west, to higher ground, and continued exploring an eerily quiet downtown.

No power. No cars. No one out on the streets.

Usually bustling at this time of the day, the core of the city was nearly completely deserted by Friday afternoon, June 21. It was a testament to the power of the rivers, but also to the orderly evacuation plan that was executed on such short notice.

It's a memory I'll keep for life.

Time to go

The image, to me, summed up just how far Calgary's rivers had encroached into the heart of the city. Then I realized I had better get the heck out of there.

A man walks through the intersection of 9th Avenue and 4th Street S.E. on June 21, during the height of the Calgary flood.

ROBSON FLETCHER/METRO

Surreal: All was quiet after the water came through

JEREMY NOLAIS
Metro reporter

A man overlooks a flooded Chinatown in downtown Calgary after up to 75,000 people had been evacuated from their homes on June 22. NATHAN DENETTE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Mission was a ghost town.

Generally bustling on a Friday night with restaurant-goers and coffee-drinkers, the southwest area's streets were now eerily quiet. The overfilled water from the nearby Elbow River was already receding, but whole vehicles floated freely in pools that had formed in the dips of the roads — some appeared to be waist deep or higher.

It was June 21, the evening after the water arrived, and many of us were only getting our first look at the damage.

A police officer had allowed me and a colleague to slip behind the barriers to snap some photos and provide some updates to thousands that had fled the area a day prior. I tweeted feverishly, providing specific details about every street I could get near.

With each post I sent out, five inquiries would come in.

It wasn't long before friends of mine began texting or calling, asking me to take a quick peek at their homes.

We weren't alone, as others who'd stayed behind or returned early skulked around in the alleyways, out of the view of police.

But few if any of the people we came across spoke. The mood was solemn, the sights were surreal.

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Covering Calgary flood in real time

Breaking news. Metro's managing editor calls experience a coming-of-age for the newspaper

DARREN KRAUSE
Managing editor

As an editor, you always hope you have prepared your team to respond to any breaking news story.

Few could be ready for what happened in June.

We had the fifth and final instalment of Robson Fletcher's series on cycling in Calgary prepared to go as a two-page spread on June 20.

We were following reports all day long of rivers swelling over their banks and the deluge that was headed to our city. It wasn't clear how significant this event would be in Calgary ... until later in the day.

Once photos and tweets and Facebook posts started rolling into the newsroom, we decided to act. The final cycling piece was shelved (it went two weeks later), and we dedicated our pages to flood coverage.

There was no particular moment, but you could sense among the staff they understood the gravity of the situation.

As the water rose

There was no particular moment, but you could sense among the staff they understood the gravity of the situation.

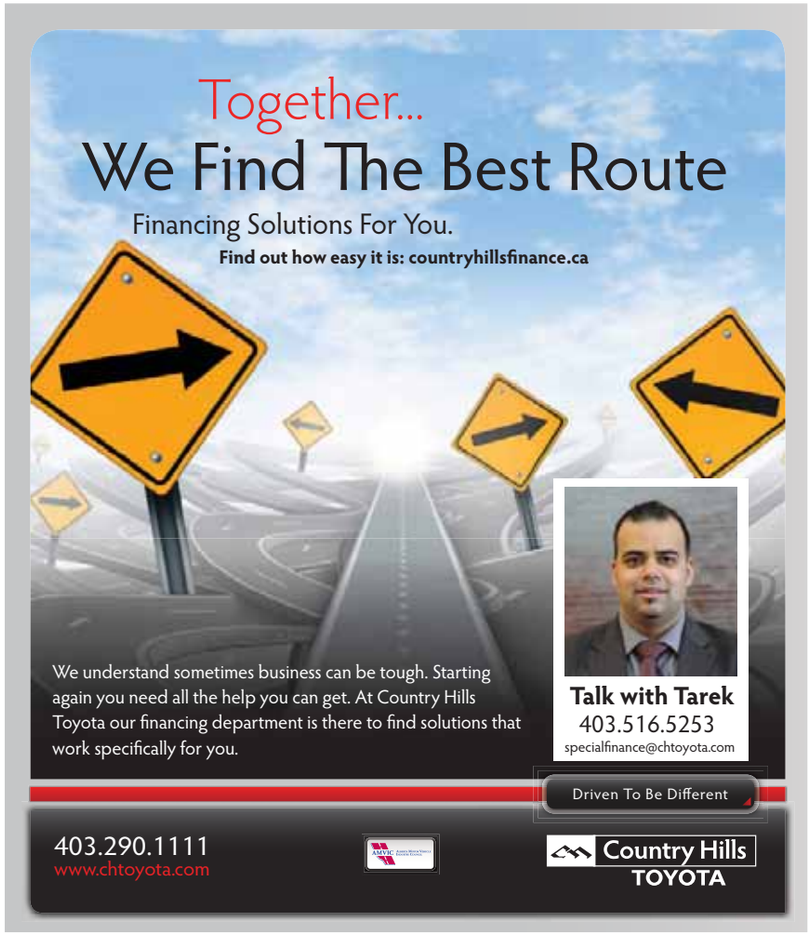
In this business, like many others, the sense of duty kicks in and you don't look at the clock. We are information providers people rely on.

The first couple of days we were operating roughly 20 hours a day with our staff of four. Live-tweeting, web updating, real time information via Facebook — not to mention putting out the newspaper was all we were focused on during that crisis. Reinforcements arrived and our crew grew to five, then seven people — and we ran roughly 18 hours a day, seven days a week, for the next two weeks.

I felt how we handled the flood coverage, punching well above our weight, was a real coming-of-age for Metro Calgary and the team we have.

It showed how when a small team of dedicated people come together with one purpose, we can achieve amazing results.

A flooded Calgary Stampede stadium is seen from an aerial view in Calgary on June 22. Environment Canada said floods were big newsmakers in Canada in 2013, and June's record flooding in Calgary and southern Alberta led its Top 10 weather stories of the year. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS



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Wishing MRU a better 2014

My alma mater.
Mount Royal University was hit hard by cuts, but community is strong heading into new year

JEREMY NOLAIS
Metro reporter

Mount Royal University, whose Main Street is shown here, was one of the Alberta universities that suffered the most after the province gutted the post-secondary portfolio in its spring 2013 budget. GLENN KELLY/FOR METRO

Mount Royal University is a special place to me.

It's where I met my fiancée and many of my closest friends.

It's where I developed a passion for reporting, taking the helm of two on-campus newspapers.

I was there in September 2009 when then-Premier Ed Stelmach announced Mount Royal would be transforming from a little college-that-could to a degree-granting university. It was a monumental day.

Then came this year's March budget and a nine per cent reduction in once-promised provincial funding.

At Mount Royal the damage appeared serious and swift — administrators were staring down an immediate $14-million deficit.

As a result eight programs were suspended, departing staff members weren't replaced, and the school eventually moved to cut enrolment 10 per cent in the face of soaring application numbers. Funding promised by the Stelmach government for that previously mentioned university transition didn't materialize and a funding gap remains at Mount Royal to this day.

Mount Royal was my home for five years. Covering the fallout of the March budget for months on end, it was difficult to hear from former professors of mine and students who'd come behind me in the journalism program. Some people feared for their jobs, while others questioned whether it was a mistake to pursue university status at all.

"They really cut some of the programs that really make Mount Royal great — there will be a huge impact," explained Connor Chisholm, who, in all likelihood, will be a member of the school's final graduating jazz class, as it was one of multiple arts-focused programs placed on the chopping block.

But while members of the Students' Association at Mount Royal University agree much was lost, they are focusing on the passionate response from the students and staff alike. I watched in awe in April as hundreds marched to the steps of Premier Alison Redford's Calgary constituency office to protest the cuts. I had figured previously students wouldn't care; they were still being allowed the chance to graduate, after all. I was dead wrong.

"I think the budget cuts, ironically, brought the MRU community together," said Missy Chareka, external affairs vice-president. "I think that was a very beautiful testament to the type of people that are here."

Association president Sadiq Valliani said the past is behind them now and he believes the school still has much to offer.

"We're looking forward to a much better 2014," he said.

More readers' online picks

You told us which online stories affected you most. These two made you 'saddest.'

Graphic GuZoo animal-farm images

In July, activists called for the Alberta government to reopen its investigation into the controversial roadside GuZoo after new footage and photos surfaced depicting what they claimed were poor living standards and safety hazards for exotic animals housed on site. Officials with Alberta government ministries and an animal anti-cruelty group conducted inspections in October. Save for a requirement the GuZoo owner install a fence around the area where he disposes carcasses, government representatives would only say they would be monitoring issues raised by the complainant. METRO

Track star killed climbing volcano

Danielle Kendall, 22, was supposed to cross the stage to receive her degree in engineering from the University of Calgary this summer. She never made it. In June, Kendall was climbing in a group of eight on the Cotopaxi volcano at an altitude of roughly 5,400 metres when she was struck and killed by a falling "chunk of ice the size of a car," according to the Ecuadoran news website andes.info.ec. METRO

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National

Rob Ford, Senate scandal, Toilet Squirrell: 2013 was a big year. Here's the stories that inspired us, made us laugh or impacted our lives in other ways.

Readers' online selections

Sex parties? Nose pickers? What is this, you ask? Well, it's what you told us — via our Metropolitan Panel — were your favourite Metro online national news stories of the year

University 'sex party' proceeds

After a "slightly overwhelming" few days of publicity in early 2013, the University of Toronto Sexual Education Centre decided to go-ahead with its "Sexy Social" at Oasis Aqua Lounge, a club that bills itself as a water-themed adult playground. The event, organized for its sexual awareness week, was dubbed an "epic student sex club adventure" by organizers — and labelled as an orgy on a Reddit post.The groups co-ordinator Dylan Tower said the party was not an orgy — just a safe introduction to Toronto's sex club scene. "It's very much, come and enjoy the space, there's no prodding or pushing in that direction," he said. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

T.O. man's call for stem-cell donations

In July, Chris Taylor of Toronto called on healthy 17- to 35-year-olds to become stem-cell donors. "I need one, it turns out, to save my life," he told Metro. "More importantly, it's for everyone who needs one." OneMatch is a program run by Canadian Blood Services which matches potential stem-cell donors to unrelated patients. **METRO**

Nose pickers, rejoice

If you don't like gross things, this story is snot for you. An associate professor of biochemistry is trying to get more students interested in science by looking at the health benefits of picking your nose and eating it. Scott Napper says mucous traps germs and stops them from getting into our body, but if we consume that mucous, it could help train our immune system.
THE CANADIAN PRESS/CKOM

New rules for Canuck drivers

In early 2012, this came in from the department of red tape you didn't know existed: Canadians were required by law to have an international driving permit in addition to their regular licences when driving in Florida. The new law applied to any non-resident, but has since been unanimously repealed by legislators.
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Readers' + Metro's choice

Teen-trafficking case lacked outrage

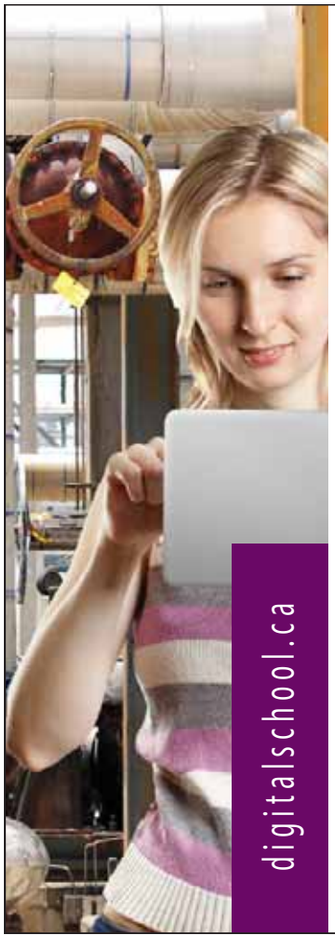
JESSICA SMITH CROSS
Metro reporter

Three girls ran away from a group home last year, lured away by a prostitution ring and put to work in Toronto.

The girls were in the care of province when they were trafficked. When the story broke, strangely, there was no public outrage.

I called up critics of both opposition parties and neither knew much. The Ministry of Child and Youth Services simply said after the criminal trial that safety would be "enhanced." I talked to a woman who was prostituted from her group home at age 12 and is now calling on the provincial government to acquire "a deep understanding" of how the sex trade involves girls in the child welfare system. I agree.

I'd also like to see hear that it will never happen again.



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Regina Humane Society

Fluff piece got me a kitten

MARCO VIGLIOTTI
Metro reporter

The first time I stepped through the doors of the Regina Humane Society last July, my heart dropped as I heard the sheepish meows of the newborn kittens.

Unfortunately, the RHS was then swarming with around 85 furry felines and turning to the public for help. In the journalism world, a story about the local animal shelter being overrun with cats would be termed a (literal) "fluff story."

But there's no question it had an undeniable impact on me. After leaving that night, I pondered whether my girlfriend and I could handle a furry addition to our brood. Then, we met Gus. Draped in white fur and boasting a pair of huge pink ears, Gus instantly curled up in my girlfriend's arms as she picked him up. Then he batted at her dangling silver earrings.

There was no doubt that he had just made our choice for us. We were his humans.

Toilet Squirrel. Winnipeg newsroom goes completely nuts over soggy rodent

BERNICE PONTANILLA
Metro reporter

It was the summer story that had Winnipeggers — and likely others all over North America — looking warily at their toilets when they went to the bathroom.

And it led to 15 minutes of fame for a St. James woman, all thanks to a little critter that somehow ended up in her toilet wet, scared and clinging for dear life.

Angela Campbell said it was her love of making people laugh that spurred her to contact Metro Winnipeg only hours after her encounter with and rescue of the now infamous Toilet Squirrel.

"The hype lasted about two weeks," said Campbell in a December interview with Metro.

"Out of all of the toilets it could have climbed out of, I'm glad it was mine and that I could help it."

Campbell and her partner heard a ruckus in their bathroom at about 7 a.m. the morning of June 12. After finding the squirrel in the toilet, Campbell used barbecue tongs to get it out and washed it with small buckets of water in her tub. She then set it free on her deck and it ran away.

Once Metro Winnipeg broke the story online, Campbell was inundated with requests for interviews from local, national and international media outlets.

"The interviews were fun and I enjoyed reading all the comments, posts and parodies," she said.

"The Toilet Squirrel seemed like such a unique, funny and feel-good story, I had to submit it," she added.

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Lululemon. Brand's response is sheer madness

MELISSA DUNNE
Metro copy editor

Bent over, hands touching toes, I swivelled to get a good look in the changing-room mirror. This is not the kind of bending and stretching I usually do in my $98 Lululemon pants.

The Luxtreme tights (not part of the recall last March) were almost as thin as pantyhose, my underwear clearly visible.

The clothing behemoth had cattily suggested the sheerness was caused by women squeezing their fat butts into too-small pants. So I went up a size, then another size. The bottoms were now loose and baggy ... and still see-through. I told a store "educator" about this, only to be snottily informed that, "It's the nature of the fabric."

It seems it's in the nature of the athletic-clothing empire to stretch its customers' patience. From the top on down, the response to the sheer-pants recall has been sheer madness.

Acting like a snobby, reed-thin, peroxide-blond yogi has been a core part of Lululemon's practice for too long. It's time for the new leadership to be the one twisting and bending for its devoted customer base. If not, this Lulu addict will have to find a new store.

An instructor, centre, conducts a yoga class while dressed in Lululemon clothes. JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Horsemeat

Do we really know what we're eating?

MIKE SPEERS
Associate managing editor, night production

Every once in a while, a news story pops up that makes you pause and reflect. Whether posing moral questions or highlighting an existential dilemma, these types of stories give our brains a much-needed shakeup.

No story better exemplifies this than the horsemeat scandal, where meat of the equus genus was passed off as high-quality beef. On the surface, this may seem like a rather unimportant story; after all, no one died or even got sick. In fact, horsemeat is quite safe, and still eaten by many people today.

But what made it so important to me was that it forced us as consumers to stop and think about what we feed ourselves and our families. What exactly is in that ground beef? Is that pork from a pig that was fed antibiotics?

These are not questions I ask very frequently, but the horsemeat scandal made me realize that I should.

Bottle-cap story goes viral

LUCY HAINES/FOR METRO IN EDMONTON

Offensive blunder

Vitamin Water commits big business gaffe

CANDICE WARD
Metro freelancer

While Blake Loates — who discovered the now-infamous "You Retard" bottle cap on the top of a bottle of Vitamin Water (a Coca-Cola product) back in September in Edmonton — has been satisfied with the outcome of the ordeal and has moved on, the story still seems to be making headlines as one of the worst Canadian business blunders of 2013.

As a journalist, it was exciting to see a story I help to uncover go viral and facilitate positive change within a major corporation, but it was also difficult to watch the toll the story was taking on the family.

Like Loates, I was unprepared for the story to go international so quickly, with major news outlets from around the world picking it up.

When stories like this one become viral, people tend to take to the web with their opinions — some supportive and others not so supportive.

Loates was never out for media attention (as I had approached her for the story), 15 minutes of fame or financial gain. She merely sought awareness to the pain the word could cause — even if it was intended to be in its French context.

To me, she was a hero for standing up for something she believed was wrong, and having the courage to stand by it, despite the criticism she was receiving.

Quick with apologies

$100K

Coca-Cola was quick to apologize for the unlucky marketing mistake, cancelled the promotion and even went above and beyond to donate $100,000 to charity.

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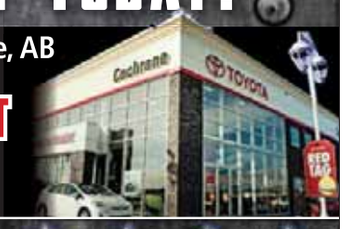

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Metro story helps man secure himself a new home

KATE WEBB
Metro reporter

JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO IN VANCOUVER

'100 times better'

When asked to update a story that impacted me over the last year, I immediately thought of Stephen Chalmers. I interviewed him again last month.

The walkway up to his new trailer sparkles with red and blue Christmas lights, and on clear nights moonlight spills through tall pine trees onto the quiet campground where he has lived for nearly two months now.

The 54-year-old is still getting used to his new surroundings after moving out of a dilapidated trailer at the run-down Beladean Trailer Park in Surrey, B.C., which lost power in September due to an improperly supervised motel demolition.

"I'm 100 times better. I feel better, I sleep better," says Chalmers, who suffers from multiple mental illnesses and lives on a meagre disability income.

New digs, old issues

After Metro ran stories on the outage, and the fact that he couldn't find a new park willing to take his old, leaky trailer, an online campaign raised enough money to buy him a newer, 1999 fifth-wheel.

But the complex problems of a man who has overcome crack addiction and alcoholism and still struggles daily with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder cannot be neatly resolved with four walls of aluminum and vinyl. Some days he feels up, some days he feels down, he says. The weather, getting used to his new neighbours, and the stress of living low-income — all of these have an effect on his moods.

But Chalmers says he seeks help when he needs it from the mental-health-care system, from friends and from a local food bank.

Moving on up

"I feel more positive about myself. I'm more sure of myself. I feel more personable towards myself.... I think of myself as someone who actually deserves to be respected, which — that's kind of foreign territory to me."

Stephen Chalmers, who says he is proud that by sharing his story publicly, he has become someone people approach for advice about how to seek help.

Commander Chris Hadfield. Starman blows our minds

HENRIETTA WALMARK
Metro copy editor

Chris Hadfield got us excited about space again. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Commander's log — stardate: 04-12-2013: "Here am I floating in my tin can/ A last glimpse of the world/ Planet Earth is blue and there's nothing left to do."

Few events in 2013 eclipsed Chris Hadfield's cover of David Bowie's Space Oddity. The music video of the astronaut literally floating in his "tin can" as he sang his farewell to life aboard the International Space Station capped an extraordinary mission of firsts.

From his arrival on the ISS in December 2012, through taking over command of Expedition 35 in March, and beyond his re-entry mid-May, Hadfield wowed the world.

As the ISS orbited Earth, he tweeted stunning photos of the planet, chatted with William Shatner, a.k.a. Captain Kirk, shared videos of zero-gravity science experiments, did Q&A's with kids via satellite-links in school auditoriums and performed an inter-space duet with Ed Robertson.

He was having the time of his life, knew it, and took us along for the ride.

But what's really cool is what's been left trailing in the stardust.

Hadfield allowed me and millions of others to experience Earth and the universe as never before, sparking our imagination and reigniting interest in the final frontier as a space worth exploring.

Online

To watch the video of Hadfield's Bowie cover song from space, visit Metronews.ca.

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#omg! Readers all a-Twitter over TEMP

Canadian author Douglas Coupland, best-known for his groundbreaking novel Generation X, visited Metro's head office just before the launch of TEMP. The 20-part fiction series was published in Metro throughout November. Here's how Metro readers responded on Twitter:

@jason_michael: A sincere heartfelt Thank You to @DouglasCoupland for TEMP. I am a temp working for the government and your words continue to inspire!

@Teyemtenot: yet another reason why Metro is my favourite thing to read in the morning!

@hurricanediana: thanks for keeping me entertained for 20 a.m. commutes. Funny, surprisingly thought-provoking and relevant.

@KaT4_2012: read TEMP every day! #youguysnailedit #precariousworkiseverywhere Douglas Coupland is brilliant

@morgancadenhead: The collaboration between @DouglasCoupland and @MetroNewsCanada is fascinating. A truly unique way to approach fiction.

@SuzanneMaryse: i am loving this! ... Coupland nails the post-modern condition once again

@ctmwyn: The best part about @DouglasCoupland #Temp is the high concentration of #CliffHangers #Serialization

METRO

Web editor Hannah Zitner chats with Douglas Coupland during the author's visit to Metro's head office in Toronto on Oct. 28. DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

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Rehtaeh taught me about respect

Rehtaeh's mother Leah Parsons. METRO FILE

HALEY RYAN
Metro reporter

More than eight months after Rehtaeh Parsons took her own life, I still think of a sentence her mother said to me just a couple days after her daughter's death.

I sat down with Leah Parsons in April, after she invited me into her Cole Harbour, N.S., home to hear about what kind of person Rehtaeh was, before and after the alleged rape that happened at a party when she was 15, in 2011.

"Rehtaeh's everywhere here," Parsons said with a sad smile as she looked around at the photos of her daughter lining the walls.

Interviewing someone who has suffered a major loss is intimidating because you want to do their loved one justice, but as I talked with Leah I realized listening and respect was all she needed.

I knew sharing Rehtaeh's story was the best way I could respect her memory and help her family. Parsons' said her daughter had been a headstrong, busy woman, passionate about animal rights.

Showing compassion

"Don't jump on the victim, help the victim."

Said Leah Parsons, Rehtaeh Parson's mother. Her daughter's story has become synonymous with bullying and has helped create legislation which criminalizes the distribution of intimate photos without consent.

World Wide Web. How 'Hattie' has changed the world in a mere 22 years

QUIN PARKER
Digital national deputy editor

The web turned 22 this year. Think of all the 22-year-olds you know; they're mainly stable with some idea of who they are, right?

Well, HTTP (let's call her Hattie, for short) is nowhere close to that.

She changes constantly.

She spent last year obsessed with a South Korean popstar.

Today, she won't shut up about Shiba Inus.

She's viciously rude to strangers, yet capable of breathtaking kindness: once, she raised $700,000 for a bullied bus monitor.

I've spent my life as an editor trying to figure out what Hattie wants.

But nobody will ever know.

The web turns 22 this year. ISTOCK ILLUSTRATION

Empathy

Bosma murder not just 'a story'

STEPHEN BALDWIN
Metro copy editor

The disappearance and murder of Tim Bosma was for me a reminder that we're all susceptible to becoming front-page stories. The 32-year-old Ancaster, Ont., man vanished after taking two men for a test drive in a truck he was selling.

The news that typically makes it to Metro's pages can often be devastating enough to elicit our sympathy, but rarely our empathy. As hard as we try, it's not easy to imagine ourselves in war-torn or hurricane-ravaged cities.

Anyone who has had to trust a stranger can relate to Bosma's situation. And the words of his wife, Sharlene Bosma, made the story even more real for me.

"Yesterday was the most horrifying day of my life and people tell me I have been so strong, and all I know is that I have a beautiful two-year-old girl at home who now needs her mommy more than ever and needs her mommy to hold it together, so I know that I cannot fall apart."

This was a heartbreaking loss for a young family, and my hope is that it forces people not to fear or distrust, but to view these stories not just as stories, but as personal experiences.

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Digital Metro's digital team takes a look back at 2013 and shares some of their most memorable stories

The lighter side of the law. A dash of humour helps humanize VicPD

LUKE SIMCOE
Metro digital reporter

On the Metro digital desk, we're well aware that funny stories are more likely to be shared by our online readers; it's an insight we share with the Victoria Police Department.

Last year, when a naive Reddit user posted about buying marijuana at the University of Victoria, VicPD Const. Mike Russell was there.

Using the "VicPDCanada" handle, Russell announced himself with a simple "cough," reminding users that the long arm of the law extends online.

Since then, he and his partner Bowen Osoko have been working to build the force's social media cred.

And despite the serious nature of police work, the pair hasn't shied away from the absurdist humour endemic to Internet culture.

When cops busted drug dealers hiding cocaine in fake "Durasell" batteries in January, Russell penned a hilarious press release and offered tips to others looking to secure their stash.

"Don't forget to label it 'not drugs' so we don't inadvertently look inside," he said.

When handed the reins of the force's Twitter account in March, Osoko opted to spam followers with pictures of cats wearing hats.

"Being silly sometimes helps humanize our officers and make them more approachable. It's also just a lot of fun."

The Victoria Police Department has spammed Twitter followers with pictures of cats wearing hats, among other humorous tactics.
COURTESY VICPD

Cats with hats

"Being silly sometimes helps humanize our officers and make them more approachable. It's also just a lot of fun."
Bowen Osoko, Victoria Police Department

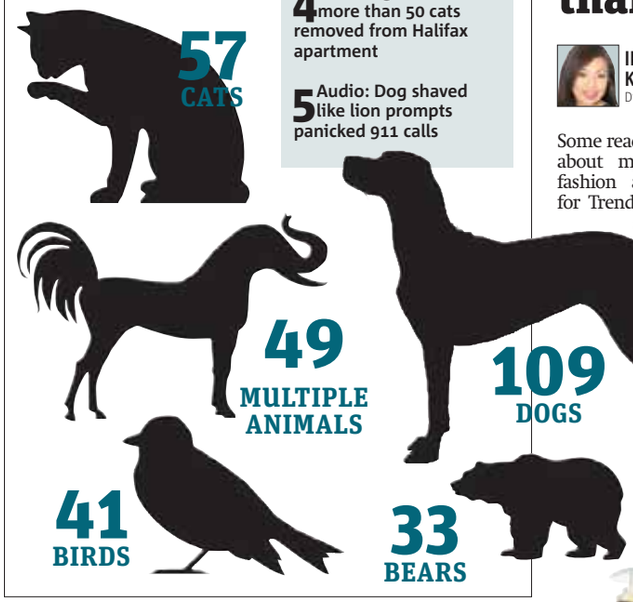
Which animal is top dog?

COLIN MCNEIL
Metro web editor

Animals. They're cute, they're cuddly, and they have a furry iron grip on the Internet. From the continuing antics of the Ikea monkey to the Toronto Zoo's pandas, it's been quite a year for Canadian fauna, but which four-legged friend is top dog at metronews.ca? The answer may give you paws for thought. There have been 539 stories on metronews.ca tagged "animals" in 2013. Here are the top 5 animals (by number of stories).

Top stories by views

1. Photos: Regina squirrels tangled by sticky situation
2. Warning: Graphic new images surface of GuZoo animal farm
3. Video: Elephant seal inhales meal in blink of an eye
4. Hoarding case sees more than 50 cats removed from Halifax apartment
5. Audio: Dog shaved like lion prompts panicked 911 calls



Irene Kuan's "sparrow face" selfies. CONTRIBUTED

Glymm. There's more to being a beauty editor than sparrow-face selfies

IRENE KUAN
Digital associate managing editor

Some readers have complained about my work as Metro's fashion and beauty blogger for Trends Report, labelling it sexist and shallow.

Granted, writing about "sparrow face selfies" and "bitchy resting face" doesn't suggest hard journalism, but the beauty industry is what it is.

In fact, if it hadn't been for an assignment reviewing beauty boxes, I would have never stumbled upon this story: One reader claimed she had been scammed by a subscription beauty box service called Glymm. The company charged her for a yearly subscription and then sent an abrupt email about their closure. It shuttered its business, website, Facebook and Twitter accounts, while keeping customers' money.

As a blogger, I care about my readers and their feedback.

I tracked the founder of Glymm using LinkedIn and badgered his secretary for information over the phone. I also used my ties as a beauty blogger to get reaction from other beauty-box businesses. After all, there were tons of irked Glymm subscribers in an industry that is still working to establish itself.

The week of April 25 the Glymm story generated more than 10,000 website views and 20,000-plus views on my Storify. It even prompted a company, Nail Polish Canada, to link to my story and provide free gifts to customers bilked by Glymm.

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Other credits available on select Silverado models. ‡ 0%/0%/1.9%/1.5% lease APR available for 48/60/48/36 months on a new or demonstrator 2014 Chevrolet Equinox FWD/ 2014 Chevrolet Cruze 1LS/2014 Chevrolet Trax LS FWD/2014 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 Crew Cab 4X4 1WT. OAC by GM Financial. Annual kilometre limit of 20,000 km, $0.16 per excess kilometre. Down payment or trade and/or security deposit may be required. Monthly payments may vary depending on down payment/trade. License, insurance, dealer fees, excess wear and km charges, applicable taxes, registration fees and other applicable fees not included. Dealers are free to set individual prices. Offer may not be combined with certain other consumer incentives. GMCL may modify, extend or terminate offers in whole or in part at any time without notice. Conditions and limitations apply. See participating dealer for details. † Offer valid only to eligible retail lessees in Canada who have obtained credit approval by GM Financial, and who accept delivery from October 11, 2013 through January 2, 2014 at a new eligible 2014 model. General Motors of Canada will pay the first month's lease payment (inclusive of taxes and any applicable pro-rata amount normally due at lease delivery as defined on the lease agreement), $0 first month lease payment means no bi-weekly payments will be due in the first month of your lease agreement. After the first month, lessee will be required to make all remaining scheduled payments over the remaining term of the lease agreement. PPSA/RDPRM is not due. Insurance, license, dealer fees, and applicable taxes not included. This offer may not be redeemed for cash and may not be combined with certain other consumer incentives available on GM vehicles. General Motors of Canada Limited reserves the right to amend or terminate this offer, in whole or in part, at any time without prior notice. Additional conditions and limitations apply. See dealer for details. ††Offer valid from December 10, 2013 to January 2, 2014 (the "Program Period") to retail customers resident of Canada who take delivery of an eligible vehicle during the Program Period. Boxing Week Bonus Credit is a manufacturer to consumer incentive (tax inclusive) and credit value depends on model and model year purchased or leased and is a combination of multiple coupons available: $500 maximum Boxing Week Bonus credit valid on 2014 model year Chevrolet cars and crossovers, comprised of up to two $250 coupon; $1,000 maximum Boxing Week Bonus credit valid on 2014 model year Chevrolet Silverado, comprised of up to four $250 coupon; $1,500 maximum Boxing Week Bonus credit valid any 2013 model year Chevrolet vehicle, comprised of up to six $250 coupon. 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Class is light-duty full-size pickups. †† U.S. government 5-Star Safety Ratings are part of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA's) New Car Assessment Program (safercar.gov). ¥* Requires 2WD Double or Crew Cab with the available 6.2L EcoTec3 V8 engine and Max Trailering Package. Maximum trailer weight ratings are calculated assuming a base vehicle, except for any option(s) necessary to achieve the rating, plus driver. The weight of other optional equipment, passengers and cargo will reduce the maximum trailer weight you've can tow. Comparison based on wardsauto.com 2013 Light-Duty Large Pickup segment and latest competitive data available. Excludes other GM vehicles. Class is light-duty full-size pickups. ~ Includes 6 months trial of Directions & Connections with Turn-by-Turn Navigation (Turn-by-Turn Navigation not available in certain areas; availability impacted by some geographical/cellular limitations), advisor assisted-routing available; Visit onstar.ca for coverage map, details and system limitations. Services vary by model and conditions. Fluid topoffs, inspections, tire rotations, wheel alignments and balancing, etc., are not covered. This offer may not be redeemed for cash and may not be combined with certain other consumer incentives available on GM vehicles. General Motors of Canada Limited reserves the right to amend or terminate this offer, in whole or in part, at any time without prior notice. Additional limitations and conditions apply. 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Retail customers resident in Canada who own or are currently leasing (during the Program Period) a GM or competitor pickup truck to receive a $1,000 credit towards the purchase, finance or lease of an eligible new 2015 or 2014 Model Year Chevrolet Silverado Light Duty, Silverado Heavy Duty, Sierra Light Duty, Sierra Heavy Duty, or 2013 Avalanche. Only one (1) credit may be applied per eligible vehicle sale. Offer is transferable to a family member living in the same household (proof of address required). This offer may not be redeemed for cash and may not be combined with certain other consumer incentives available on GM vehicles. General Motors of Canada Limited reserves the right to amend or terminate this offer, in whole or in part, at any time without prior notice. Additional conditions and limitations apply. 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CITY: 7.1L/100 KM
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AND 0% DOWN
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DON'T PAY FOR ONE YEAR* + UP TO $2,500 HOLIDAY PRICE ADJUSTMENTS

2013 SONATA
HWY: 5.6L/100 KM
CITY: 8.7L/100 KM
SELLING PRICE: $21,769
2013 SONATA. DELIVERY & DESTINATION INCLUDED.
CH785088
DON'T PAY FOR ONE YEAR* + UP TO $2,500 HOLIDAY PRICE ADJUSTMENTS

2013 ACCENT 5 DR L
HWY: 5.3L/100 KM
CITY: 7.1L/100 KM
SELLING PRICE: $14,819
ACCENT 5 DR L 6-SPEED MANUAL. DELIVERY & DESTINATION INCLUDED.
OWN IT FOR $71 BI-WEEKLY
WITH 0% FINANCING FOR 96 MONTHS
AND 0% DOWN
CH117536 Inventory is limited. GLS model shown
DON'T PAY FOR ONE YEAR* + UP TO $750 HOLIDAY PRICE ADJUSTMENTS

2013 SANTA FE SPORT
HWY: 5.3L/100 KM
CITY: 7.8L/100 KM
2013 CANADIAN UTILITY VEHICLE OF THE YEAR
WITH 0% FINANCING FOR 36 MONTHS
AND $0 DOWN
SELLING PRICE: $38,379
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Flowers sit on the Dublin grave of Lt. Thomas Leslie Bourke following a request from his great nephew on the other side of the world. ELMOSLATS/IMGUR

Restoring faith in humanity

Warm and fuzzies. Stories of kindness aren't as rare as we might think

ANDREW FIFIELD
Metro web editor

Internet chatter is often maligned as a squalid cesspool of anonymous viciousness.

The maligners are correct. We see what you write. You monsters.

The maligners are also wrong. The web is populated by millions, and the loudest voices aren't always the most accurate representation.

According to a traffic study of the New York Times website, readers are much more likely to share and comment on stories thick with warm and fuzzies.

This year, our experience with a Halifax man and a trans-Atlantic solid, done anonymously, fits snugly among those findings.

Last March, Andrew Bourke took to Reddit (speaking of maligned) with a moonshot request: For somebody who lives in Dublin to swill a St. Patrick's Day pint at the grave of his great uncle, who died more than 50 years before Bourke was born.

A short time later, a user named elmoslats replied with a simple "It was a bitch to find. Bought some flowers," linking to photos of the grave, newly festooned with flowers.

Below that reply came a cascade of kudos, plaudits, attaboys and robust reconstructions of a previously shattered faith in humanity.

For his part, a delighted Bourke told us, "I honestly cried." His offers of reward were spurned by elmoslats, who preferred to stay anonymous.

Despite comments we received from people revelling in a rare story of kindness, they aren't that rare. Amid the rancour of online discourse, most of us are simply cracking jokes, swapping hobbies and sharing experiences.

Sure, the rancour can be disheartening. But it's also critical to the experience — especially when it summons people happy to fight back.

So, perhaps instead of clutching to a seemingly slippery faith in humanity that wavers based on Twitter's daily mood, everybody should just keep up the good work in 2014.

We've done OK so far.

A life-changing story

Life is stranger than fiction

TAKARA SMALL
Metro web editor

Approximately 10 months ago — almost to the day — my life changed.

A small, and what I imagined to be unimportant at the time, story about the weathered, yellowing Bible on my grandmother's nightstand brought me back in touch with a family member I had long assumed would be lost forever.

The book was and still is a treasured item that was cherished by my grandmother during her early years in Canada, but more importantly a testament to the life she built in Canada. The family tree, barely legible now, charts how much my family has changed.

I was asked to write a story about my grandmother's Bible for a feature during Black History Month. I never thought an off-the-cuff story about a Bible my grandmother held onto as a young woman would connect me with a long-lost relative from my childhood, but it did.

I lost contact with my aunt from my father's side of the family after my parents separated and I moved away from my childhood neighbourhood. The story (and picture) that appeared in the newspaper caught the eye of my aunt during her morning reading, who later contacted Torstar News Service.

Three weeks after the story ran in the paper I met her and my little cousin at my apartment — two blocks away from where she lives.

Sometimes reality is weirder than fiction.

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Matching pieces also ON SALE
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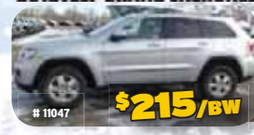

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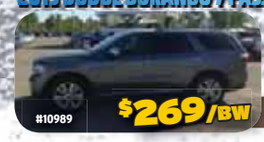

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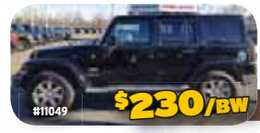

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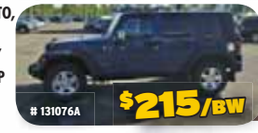

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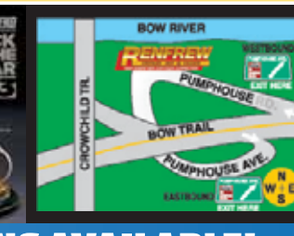

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‘I couldn’t imagine going to war at that age’

60th anniversary of Korean War armistice. Ottawa reporter gains perspective from trip with Canadian vets

JOE LOFARO
Metro reporter

It had ended like any other workday. I was walking to my car after finishing a shift at Metro in Ottawa, except this day a man stopped me on the sidewalk. It was the press secretary of then veteran affairs minister Steven Blaney.

We exchanged friendly hellos and then he asked me out of the blue, “Hey, does Metro send reporters on government-sponsored trips?”

Good question, I thought. When asked why, he asked if I was interested in going to South Korea to report on a delegation of 36 Korean War veterans from Canada who were going back to mark the 60th anniversary of the armistice.

Well, fast-forward two weeks later, and I was on a plane headed to Asia just as North Korea was threatening to obliterate the South for the umpteenth time.

But that posturing didn’t concern veterans like Frank Bayne one bit. After all, he’d have to be pretty lion-hearted to enlist in the war in 1953 in his early 20s.

I couldn’t imagine going to war at that age, or at any age for that matter. Yet these brave, selfless men left everything behind to fight someone else’s war, in a country they knew very little about.

Sitting on a tour bus to and from our hotel with veterans like John Stuber, Romeo Daley, Joel Beaman, and Bayne put their sacrifices into perspective in a way a high school textbook simply cannot.

“I lost some really good friends,” Beaman told me after leaving the Canadian Korean War Monument in Gapyeong on April 24.

In my interviews I felt, at times, that I was opening up old wounds by asking questions about the war. But at the same time, I was reassured. Telling their stories ensures they will not be forgotten.

I left South Korea with a deep appreciation for veterans that I probably never would have had were it not for meeting them.

Pastor Won Seong-Jae hugs Canadian veteran John Stuber on, April 26 as dozens of people greeted Korean War vets in Busan, South Korea. JOE LOFARO/METRO

Will Vancouver pianos catch on?

JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO FILE

Park-side pianos

Ticklin’ ivories

Four colourfully painted pianos, placed in parks and along the seawall for passersby to play a ditty, landed a spot in Vancouverites’ hearts in summer 2013. The inaugural Keys to the Streets project encouraged people to gather to enjoy a tune and inspired a host of impromptu concerts enjoyed by thousands.

Run by a team from Vancouver’s six post-secondary institutions, the project mimicked the “Play me, I’m yours” display, which originated in Britain in 2008.

What a deal

$200

It only cost $200. With free pianos from Craigslist — they were otherwise destined for the dump — and donations of moving equipment and student artwork, the volunteer-led project was possibly the cheapest initiative to bring such widespread joy. Organizers figure they spent a few hundred bucks to fix sticky keys, replace covers and chains, and touch up paint throughout one of the driest summers on record.

A few noisy nights

City only receives one complaint

Organizers informally asked a few rowdy players to tone down the volume after 11 p.m., but the response to the instruments was overwhelmingly positive from tourists and residents alike.

One person even emailed the city to say the pianos created a “sense of belonging.”

The city only received one complaint after a particularly fortissimo late-night performance woke up a neighbour near Robson Park.

Encore!

Pianos should be back next summer

Vancouver expects to see these colourful pianos back on the streets in summer 2014.

Potential partners have approached the organizers in hopes of turning their locations into concert venues.

While the exact set list is yet to be determined, aspiring street musicians should stay tuned for more information.

EMILY JACKSON/METRO IN VANCOUVER

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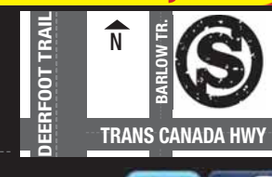

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Police dogs: Partners in (fighting) crime

Quanto, an Edmonton police dog killed on duty in 2013. CONTRIBUTED

LEAH GERMAIN
Metro reporter

Adam Segin is at a crossroads.

As a constable with the Edmonton police canine unit, Segin and his partner Storm have worked as a team for almost seven years — a year shy of retirement.

Unlike other jobs, retirement for a handler and police dog is a definite.

I first met Segin and his jet-black German shepherd while I was researching a followup article on Quanto, an Edmonton police dog killed on duty in 2013.

I was inspired by Quanto's story and the partnership between handler and service dog. It was a special bond — one that can only be formed with a creature that loves unconditionally.

For Segin, it's a bond he's been developing since Storm was seven weeks old. A bond he not only bets his job on, but his life. And as their bond grows stronger Storm grows older.

"That's the hardest part for me right now," Segin said. "He is eight years old and the last year has been kind of challenging.... (The job) is so much wear and tear on their joints, hips, knees and back."

Segin's boss, Staff Sgt. Troy Carriere said members of the canine unit have spent a good chunk of their careers training to be handlers, which can make it especially hard for them to leave and retire their dogs.

"The really difficult part is when you drive away for the first time and go to your new job," Carriere said, remembering his own experience. "Your partner is really a part of you and you are leaving him or her at home."

'Bridegroom jailed over bomb hoax' brings copy editor endless laughter

JONATHAN RUSSELL
Metro copy editor

Phoning it in

On Oct. 23, bleary-eyed at the end of a shift filled with tragedy and despair, I edited a brief entitled 'Bridegroom jailed over bomb hoax.'

I re-read the lede to justify my initial laughter: "A British bridegroom who made a hoax bomb threat rather than admit he'd neglected to book the venue for his wedding was sentenced Tuesday to a year in jail."

That combination of words buckled me in my cubicle. I thought of George Costanza.

I re-read the second paragraph: "Neil McArdle, 36, called Liverpool's St. George's Hall on his scheduled wedding day in April, claiming a bomb was due to go off in 45 minutes."

Brilliant.

Surely, however briefly, he must have thought: The consequences of A (bomb threat) were lesser than or equal to the consequences of B (saying, "Love of my life, I need help finding a venue. Please. I'm lost without you.")

Indeed.

It must have made him so lonely, that little cage he built without any exits.

Better than Chekhov

Breathlessly, I re-read the last paragraph: "His fiancée, Amy Williams, was left standing in the street in her wedding gown while the building was evacuated."

Better than Chekhov.

It's so pointless and painfully unique it makes me laugh when I can't sleep or am stuck in line at the grocery store, and is therefore the most practical piece of news I'm aware of, empty as it is of tragedy and despair (except for McArdle, God bless him).

And anyway, they're still together.

What was he thinking?

Surely, however briefly, he must have thought: The consequences of A (bomb threat) were lesser than or equal to the consequences of B (saying, "Love of my life, I need help finding a venue. Please. I'm lost without you.")

In Regina, sap left li'l squirrels in sticky sitch

The Animal Clinic of Regina got a surprise this past summer when a city worker brought in six squirrels fused together by their tails, which had been soaked with sap from the pine tree they were nesting in. They were sedated, and the veterinarian team worked to untangle the mess. Their tails were then shaved of the matted fur and they were given antibiotics to prevent infection, before being released back into the city's green-space. METRO IN REGINA/CONTRIBUTED

Metro picks:

Ebert's gift was connecting with people

EVA LAM
Metro copy editor

Roger Ebert

Following Roger Ebert's death on April 4, the L.A. Times published a tribute dubbing him "the first citizen critic." That, to me, summed up his greatest gift: his ability to connect with people.

In whatever role the multi-hyphenate took on — print movie reviewer, TV personality, film-fest founder, prolific blogger and tweeter — he presented criticism not as dissertation, but as conversation.

At the Movies introduced me to Ebert, as it did for countless others, but it was his writing that really drew me in. His reviews read less like measured analysis than a friend recounting his latest experience at the movies. I loved his no-nonsense directness, his heart and humour. He was as eloquent in describing his deep and evolving affection for La Dolce Vita over three decades as he was in parsing the bewildering logic of Transformers 2's battle scenes.

When cancer took away his ability to speak, he found a second act through social media and on his blog, where he ruminated on a range of subjects: movies, yes, but also gun control, religion, his childhood, mortality. Inversely, the dialogue between him and his audience was stronger than ever. As he did throughout his life, Ebert showed how mighty one voice can be when it recognizes the joy in being part of a chorus.

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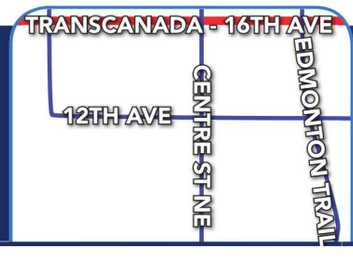

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International

From strange to serious — the world was a fascinating and sometimes heartbreaking place in 2013.

Readers' online selections

Nothing hard-hitting here: Metro online readers gravitated towards shark wrestling, men faking labour and a lion-like dog on the loose as their favourite international stories of 2013, as picked through our Metropolitan Panel

Man fired after wrestling sharks

A British man who became an Internet sensation after wrestling with a shark on an Australian beach said in March that he was fired after his employer discovered he'd been abroad while on sick leave. Paul Marshallsea was filmed yanking a six-foot-long shark away from waders at Caloundra beach in January. But his intervention also caught the eye of his employer.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Interview with a Smallest Penis contest winner

Meet Nick Gilronan: the winner of the Smallest Penis in Brooklyn. Gilronan entered the contest held in Kings County Bar in Brooklyn, N.Y. in August and came out on top despite the, uhh, stiff competition. Anyway, you guys couldn't get enough of Metro's Q & A with this guy.

METRO WORLD NEWS

Dog shaved like lion prompts 911 call

A dog that has been shaved to look like a lion set off a panic in Norfolk, Va. in January. Three 911 calls came in on the same day reporting a lion wandering the streets. It's "roaming loose in the neighbourhood a few blocks from the zoo," one caller reported to the 911 dispatcher at 10:19 a.m. After the 911 calls, Norfolk police called the Virginia Zoo to make sure its lions were all accounted for. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Dutch men undergo simulated labour pains

This video of two Dutch men who decided to find out how difficult childbirth is by hooking themselves up to a machine that simulates real-life labour pains was a huge hit with readers. METRO

Watch the video at metronews.ca.

Dog with human-like face gets hundreds of adoption offers

Tonik the dog became an international sensation when a photo of him was picked up by media around the globe. "His pictures have been up on the adoption site since September 2011," said Jen Schwartz, the founder and owner of the Homeward Bound animal shelter. "For some reason, someone decided this week that he looks like a human and it's been overwhelming since," said Schwartz at the time of the buzz.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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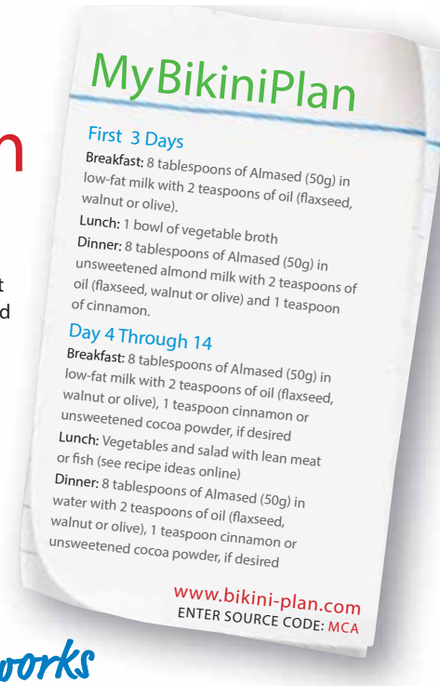

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Royal baby: Catnip for the masses

CAROL CHUNG
Metro copy editor

The arrival of Prince George of Cambridge was the most anticipated birth in the history of modern media. At least, that's the assumption you could make when looking back at the relentless press coverage of the royal pregnancy. Some readers were likely sick of hearing about Will and Kate's spawn long before he popped out of the womb, but that heady mix of wealth, privilege and youth is catnip for the masses, journalists included. If there's one thing we can take away from the baby bombardment it's that the British monarchy is in no danger of being dethroned, not with the press at its side.

'The people's Pope.' Will Francis be a paragon of progressive papacy?

MIKE PALMA
Metro copy editor

Since not long after Pope Benedict XVI became the first Holy Father in centuries to quit his job, his successor, Francis, has captured headlines and hearts with his progressive approach to the papacy. I grew up Catholic, and his humility, his focus on the poor and his expressed tolerance of gays and non-believers has landed him in my good books as well.

But is Francis really a progressive symbol of an evolving Church? Time hailed him as "The People's Pope" in its Person of the Year cover story, and suggested he's "poised to transform" the Vatican. He's unquestionably been great PR compared to the previous pope, who struck me as harsher and more conservative than John Paul II before him. But how much power does Francis actually have to change things for good?

Even if Francis makes the poor and downtrodden the focus of his entire papal career, his church remains strictly against homosexuality, divorce, contraception and abortion. Unless he's willing and able to change the official rules, I'm not sure I'll continue to find him so delightful.

Pope Francis
FRANCO ORIGLIA/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Self-capture

Selebrating selfies

LACY ATALICK
Metro copy editor

Two weeks after the Oxford Dictionary declared "selfie" to be the word of the year, an Australian eagle with a flair for the topical put the icing on the proverbial cake by stealing a video camera, recording its 110-kilometre journey and, oh yeah, snapping a selfie along the way.

As the selfie has become ubiquitous, app developers have capitalized — principally by offering photo-editing technology to capture a best look — while bloggers have borne witness to the form's avant garde (hint: The duck face is finished; the sparrow and the "squinch" are apparently where we as a culture are headed).

But as far as I'm concerned, the eagle's is so far the best, most transcendent, least filtered selfie. Its beak seems to poke the camera's lens, to pierce the scrim between parody and coincidence, and I can't help but laugh at what we've become.

Egypt

‘An uncertain reality — a nightmare’

DEENA DOUARA
Metro copy editor

Calls to relatives in Egypt are reminders that while the deteriorating state of affairs — of people’s spirits and dreams and savings — is frustrating to behold from here, it’s an uncertain reality — a nightmare — over there.

I was there this summer, in the leadup to the anniversary of then-president Mohammed Morsi’s inauguration. I tried to understand the arguments: why Egyptians must protest; call for legal processes; stay home and give him a fair chance. I tried to capture that atmosphere for Metro, on TV and for the Huffington Post, all garnering strong reactions. As protests intensified, so did people’s rhetoric. A prevalent “You’re with us or with the terrorists” approach took root, serving to justify military crackdowns and delegitimizing nuanced opinions that didn’t conform neatly to “pro-military” or “pro-Muslim Brotherhood.”

The 2011 revolution was one of the most dramatic scenes Egyptians witnessed in at least three decades. There was uncertainty and disagreement and plenty of anger.

But I believe it is 2013 that really changed Egyptians. Mistrust, contempt, revenge, hatred — these sentiments are relatively new, and they are frightening.

As repression, imprisonment and censorship have seemingly increased alongside an ever-declining economy, Egyptians now must too fear their neighbours. And divided, they say, is how they fall.

An Egyptian woman reacts in Tahrir Square the day after former Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, the country’s first democratically elected president, was ousted from power on July 4, 2013 in Cairo.

ED GILES/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Manning. The truth at what cost?

KEVIN HAMILTON
Metro copy editor

Chelsea Manning

GETTY IMAGES FILE

Chelsea Manning is a name too quickly forgotten. This summer, the disgraced soldier was convicted of espionage for transferring classified U.S. military files to WikiLeaks, receiving a 35-year sentence. The attention paid to Manning does little justice to the immensity of her actions. The biggest leak in U.S. history fuelled allegations of corrupt tactics, moral bankruptcy and outright war crimes. But the world instead fixated on WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and has now moved on to NSA leaker Edward Snowden. Manning was further marginalized during her trial as her mental stability was called into question. And, of course, her announcement that she would live as a woman caused no end of distraction. All of this overshadowed what I think should be the true focus of the affair: ethics. Was Manning justified in breaking the law, potentially harming U.S. interests and possibly putting lives at risk in order to expose the truth? What acts are acceptable in the name of security? And how can a government remain accountable to its people while keeping its activities secret?

Keeping an eye on Syria

ALI ZAFAR
Metro copy editor

Nearly three years later, the Arab Spring has morphed into a disgruntled winter in Syria. While several Arab nations have toppled their dictators, Syria continues to be stuck between rebel strongholds and leader Bashar al-Assad.

Bearing the wrath of this power struggle are the citizens of the country. Around two million of them have been displaced and Amnesty International estimates that more than 100,000 people have been killed since the conflict started in March 2011.

I’ve seen atrocities committed both in the name of religion and by iron-fist rulers while living in the Middle East and South Asia, which is why the plight of Syrians is something I can relate to. Being considered a religious minority in Pakistan, I can empathize with the woes of religious minorities in Syria, worried about their country under the control of Islamist rebels. It’s why I’ll keep a close eye on stories coming out of Syria in 2014.

Steubenville

Victim blaming

JILLIAN BELL
Metro copy editor

For many rape victims, the rape itself is just the beginning of their nightmare. They are shamed and doubted. Their every action is questioned: What was she thinking wearing that skirt? Or drinking that much alcohol? This year, we saw the world rally around a rape victim in the Steubenville case. This was a refreshing, but an all too rare occurrence. If only every case of sexual assault generated such an uproar, perhaps more women would have the courage to report being raped, and more rapists would be held accountable.

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Voices This is rare. Three Metro columnists are asked to write about their most memorable work this year. Turns out it can't be done without your feedback.

MY ONE LONG YEAR

JUST SAYIN'

Paul Sullivan
metronews.ca

Even though asking me to choose a favourite column is like asking me to proclaim a public preference for my goldfish over my hamster, I have dutifully reviewed Just Sayin' for the past year, and it turns out I have a lot to say, which might surprise a few people.

But I've managed to narrow it down.

Generally, I try to communicate my total bemusement with contemporary life. It's the best of times. It's the worst of times. It's the weirdest of times, right?

That makes for lots of material, such as:

CONTRIBUTED

Multi-billionaire Amazon's Jeff Bezos was in the news this year for buying the fabled Washington Post of Woodward and Bernstein fame for the equivalent of billionaire pocket lint: $250 million.

That's less, by the way, than what the Qatar Royal family paid for Impressionist painter Paul Cézanne's The Card Players — $259 million.

(Big deal. I paid $2.59 for The Card Players at the neighbourhood garage sale. I really love the look on the bulldog's face.)

ISTOCK IMAGES

Then there are those columns that are memorable for some really great bits, such as the one about the one-way expedition to Mars that was signing up potential colonists earlier this year:

"Therefore Mars One is looking for a special kind of person. Someone who is nuts enough to spend the rest of his or her life stuck in a climate-controlled hut the size of a portable toilet but well adjusted enough not to try to eat his or her fellow castaways."

What writing!

Of course, you can't write a column these days without having your own online anvil chorus, and I managed to hit a sour note writing about people who don't wear enough clothes on the beach. My protest went along aesthetic lines, not skin care, and the mob that formed outside my virtual door was not happy.

Here's just a taste: "Holy crap this is arguably the most ignorant thing I've ever read in my life."

You can't please all of the people all of the time, but if you try really hard, you can annoy all of the people all of the time.

Fortunately, I did manage to get an online standing O for a column I wrote about a movement to ban tipping that's just getting off the ground in New York and Chicago. One reader, named Crystal, gave me some unordinary positive feedback: "I don't usually write in to comment on articles of any sort, but after reading your brief article I had to say, very well written, entertaining, all the while thought-provoking. Excellent!"

Thanks, Crystal, I needed that. As you can tell, it's been a long year.

Reader writes

"After reading your brief article I had to say, very well written, entertaining, all the while thought-provoking." Crystal

2013 is over and I'm left holding the (mail)bag

HE SAYS

John Mazerolle
readers@metronews.ca

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I've been told to pick one favourite 2013 column and reminisce, but my columns are like my children and once they're out in the world I will deny they are mine.

Instead, let's open the mailbag. After a year of columnastic genius I feel it's important for readers to provide a fresh perspective on how wonderful I am. For instance, one fan recently sent me a Facebook message that said my columns are "desperately TRYING to be funny. Alas, they just come off juvenile." To hear my work is desperately funny, yet childlike, is wonderful. I clicked on her page to thank her and learned she's graduated from "I didn't finish (2008)," which signals a level of brash independence and attention to detail I think we can all emulate. Under professional skills it said, "crack-smoking," which means she will soon be a writer (if she's joking) or the mayor of a large city (if she's not).

Mail moment

"Stupid yellow journalism at it's finest!!!" Online Fan

Another reader let me know my column is "pure dribble." I briefly assumed it was an insult and he had misspelled 'drivel.' Then I realized it was a basketball-related compliment, and that he considers me the Michael Jordan of Metro columnists. Pure, unadulterated dribble. Swish.

Some other actual mailbag highlights: * "Hypocrit much?" (More than you. I add an 'e.') * "Do your research." (No.) * "Stupid yellow journalism at it's finest!!!" (There are numerous problems here, but they are amply overcome by the use of three exclamation points. Bravo.) And that's the 2013 mailbag. See you next year, readers — older, but not wiser!!!

I swear, and I am a girl

SHE SAYS

Jessica Napier
@MetroSheSays

As 2013 comes to a close, it's fun to look back at some of the memorable columns I've written over the course of the year. Back in June, I wrote a piece about swearing in public. I described how my boyfriend and I had been reprimanded by an overbearing parent at a neighbouring table after dropping a few expletives during a Sunday brunch.

From the inbox

"I am saddened when I hear a young person, especially a young girl, making a public reference to parts of their body and their knowledge of sexual activity with obscenities."
Anonymous reader

I was hardly advocating for an uncivilized society full of foul-mouthed brutes, but the column definitely struck a nerve among our readers.

I received a few letters from people who identified swearing in public as a generational problem. One gentleman wrote an email stating, "I am saddened when I hear a young person, especially a young girl, making a public reference to parts of their body and their knowledge of sexual activity with obscenities."

I understand the importance of good manners, but I take offence to this notion that I should suppress any behaviour that is deemed 'unladylike' according to a 1950s standard.

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The good, the bad and the ugly

Year in review. The beginning of a new year, like the opening of a new film, holds so much promise... It's time for Metro to screen 2013's crop

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood

It's time to bid farewell to 2013 with a look at the most disappointing films of the year.

Pacific Rim
Giant robots! Fighting giant sea monsters! Directed by Guillermo del Toro! This could've been so good, and obviously we thought it would be, but the results were just... not so much.

Only God Forgives
Maybe Nicholas Winding Refn was punishing people for liking his fantastic "Drive" too much, but this art-house meditation on masculinity, violence and retribution — we think? — was just a slog.

Star Trek Into Darkness
We might have been less disappointed in this long-awaited sequel if J.J. Abrams had just come out and said from the get-go that Benedict Cumberbatch was playing Khan. If only that were the only problem with it, though.

Jack the Giant Killer
Maybe it was foolish to expect Bryan Singer to do something cool and interesting with the old Jack and the Beanstalk fairy tale, but this one just fell flat.

Director Guillermo del Toro really dropped the ball on Pacific Rim — a movie that promised so much and delivered so little. CONTRIBUTED

Metro's picks

1. Gravity
2. Blue Jasmine
3. 12 Years A Slave
4. Hunger Games
5. Dallas Buyers Club

Oldboy
Spike Lee's plodding, uninspired remake of Park Chan-wook's 2003 cult classic at least makes a strong case for renting the original. Some things don't translate well, apparently.

Lovelace
A lot of foreplay that led to not very much of anything else, this exploration of the woman behind Deep Throat held too much back.

The Fifth Estate
Maybe it was too soon to explore the rise and fall of WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange, but it seemed perfectly reasonable that Bill Condon and Benedict Cumberbatch were up to the task. Apparently not.

Anchorman 2
Following up an iconic comedy is tough, but we're still not sure what Adam McKay and Will Ferrell were thinking with most of the choices here. Lesson learned: A little bit of Steve Carell's Brick Tamland goes a long way. Also, the film's jokes about racism and sexism actually just play as racist and sexist. Maybe next time, guys?

Enough Said
James Gandolfini's last leading film role, Julia Louis-Dreyfus' return to movies, another chance for Nicole Holofcener to examine adult relationships? This one had so much going for it. Too bad the end result is flat, uninspired and far too pleased with itself.

Metro pick

American Hustle

IN FOCUS
Richard Crouse
scene@metronews.ca

American Hustle's story of flim flam men and women, the FBI and a real life sting known as Abscam has emerged as my favourite movie of 2013. It's an entertainingly audacious movie that will doubtless be compared to The Wolf of Wall Street because of the similarity in tone and themes, but this time around director David O. Russell has almost out-Scorsese'd Martin Scorsese. Add to that unexpected and compelling performances from the a-list ensemble cast—Christian Bale, Amy Adams, Jeremy Renner, Bradley Cooper and Jennifer Lawrence — and it adds up to the most fun I had at the movies this year.

We asked and you let us know that Gravity was your top movie pick for 2013. CONTRIBUTED

Reader's pick

What do you think? We recently polled Metro readers to see what film they considered to be the best of 2013. Gravity was the winner, hands down.

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HBO's Game belongs only on the Throne

The shocking Red Wedding episode of Game of Thrones made Metro's list of the best of 2013. HANDOUT

TV. Whether you binge watched or faithfully tuned in, there were a number of great shows this year. Metro weighs in on what was tube-worthy in 2013

Alexandra Cavallo, our TV correspondent from south of the border, gives us her picks for the best shows on TV, however you may watch TV.

Game of Thrones
Game of Thrones had the best season ever. What other show has the balls to ruthlessly — and awesomely, creatively and bloodily — kill off multiple main characters like it ain't no thing? Game of Thrones reigns supreme. See what I did there?

House of Cards
Other than HBO (and FX and A&E and — well, damn, seems like television is killing it lately, huh?) Netflix is putting out some of the most exciting and game-changing programs. House of Cards — to put it simply — is utterly captivating, and this comes from a person, who, I admit it, doesn't even vote. Politics is not my thing. But this show has it all: intrigue, sex, violence, scandal and Kevin Spacey. Enough said.

Project Runway
Here's my shout-out to reality TV. I love reality it. I watch it all. Housewives, teen moms, geriatric moms, people who have sex with inanimate objects — I'll watch them all, as long as it's "real." But Project Runway (technically a reality competition show, which makes it higher brow) is legitimately a quality show. The contestants (for the most part) are actually astoundingly talented, the challenges are fresh and exciting, and there's still enough cat fighting and drama to sate my appetite for lowbrow reality crap.

Girls
How did nobody else even mention this show? I don't care what anybody says, Lena Dunham is a genius and remarkably likeable despite airing her flaws — both emotional and physical — for the whole world to gawk at. Sure, the second season didn't quite meet the very high bar that the debut season set — it was a little too dark, and sometimes depressing — but as a 20-something girl myself (29 still counts) I can totally relate to almost everything that is said and done on this show. Don't judge me.

Nathan For You
Most people have probably never seen or even heard of this show. Get familiar, people, because Canadian comedian Nathan Fielder is one of the funniest dudes on the tube right now. This docu-reality comedy series basically features Fielder playing a deadpan, dead-eyed version of himself, using his "business background" to help out failing companies and individuals. Spoiler alert: He is not helpful. Trust me, you've got to watch it.

ALEXANDRA CAVALLO/MWN

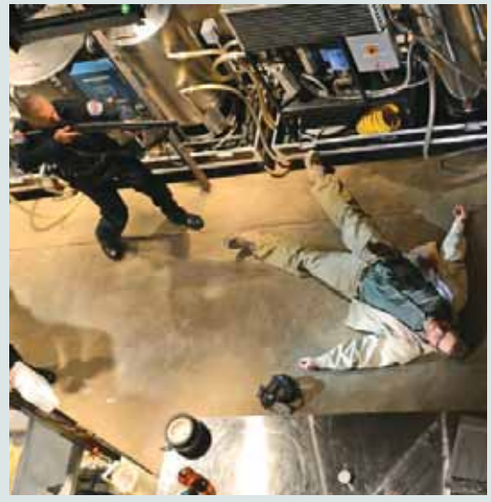
Metro's picks

1. Breaking Bad comes to an end
2. Toronto Mayor Rob Ford is lampooned on every major late night talk show and Saturday Night Live
3. The murder-filled Red Wedding episode of Game of Thrones shocks viewers not familiar with the book series.
4. Arrested Development returns to TV via Netflix
5. Netflix series House of Cards becomes the first web TV show to receive major Primetime Emmy Award nominations, and goes on to win in three categories.

Finally, a healthy binge

You could say I'm always a little late to the party. Up until six months ago, I didn't have Netflix, I never watched TV online and I never thought I was missing out. That was until I was introduced to Breaking Bad. I now fully indulge in what is being called binge-tv watching. I have devoured entire series (Family Guy, The Boondocks, American Dad, Episodes, The Walking Dead, to name a few. Yes, a few), and have spent an unacceptable amount of time on my couch. And though I'm nostalgic for the days of looking forward to my favourite show every week, and being left hanging for an entire summer before my shows return. I embrace this new way of enjoying television even if I'm a little late. MIRIAM OSBORNE/METRO

Final eight episodes



Breaking Bad: The final curtain

In mid 2013 the final eight episodes of the ultra-popular and critically acclaimed series Breaking Bad went on air. As usual Bryan Cranston and Aaron Paul turned in stellar performances and creator Vince Gilligan ensured the climactic episodes did not disappoint. We join the second half of the final season with Hank finally realizing that Walt is the infamous meth kingpin Heisenberg.

This riveting show draws to a close with eight suspense-filled episodes. We see Jesse team up with Hank to catch Walt, Todd's ruthless relatives committing horrible deeds and Walter, in conflict with his family and on the run, tying up as many loose ends as he can. Viewers were rewarded for their loyalty with a brilliantly crafted and gradual ending to this Ned Flanders-turned-Scarface story. As the screen faded to the sound of Baby Blue I realized we may never see the likes of it again. Pure Genius. EOIN WELDON/METRO

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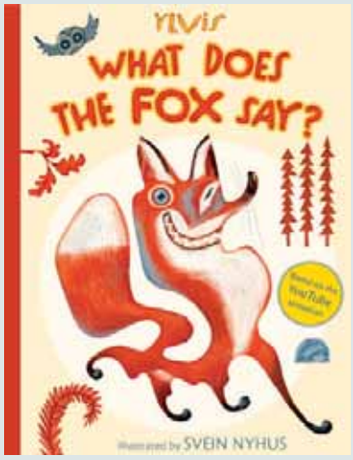
The 2013 cyber heights of cyberspace

Metro's picks

1 Chris Hadfield's out-of-this-world version of Space Oddity inspired many. Kris Abel walks you through his blast off into the collective consciousness.

2 Norwegian comedy group Ylves' video for What Does the Fox Say? was YouTube's top video of the year, and has even spawned an illustrated book.



3 Amanda Bynes' 2013 tweets left many of us scratching out heads — and just shocked.

4 Felix Baumgartner's freefall from the edge of space.

5 Patrick Stewart's tweets left an impression on anyone within a half mile of Twitter this year. Read what we have to say about them on this page.

A Canadian star was born

MIND THE APP
Kris Abel
@RealKrisAbel
scene@metronews.ca

Chris Hadfield won the Internet this year with a viral hit that was anything but accidental. He evoked the beauty of our world by sharing how difficult it was to leave its orbital view. These are complex emotions that he somehow captured with an iPad recording of himself singing David Bowie's Space Oddity. His Space Station video lessons and tweeted photos revealed a master communicator who understands the web better than anyone. Through him we have an extraordinary connection to space exploration, but also an example of how a cynical web culture can embrace values that are sophisticated and sincere.

Another kind of fame

Getting high off Patrick's personality

Making memes from Patrick Stewart's many starring movie roles is nothing new for those who lurk the intertubes. But when his fiancé posted a video of an allegedly stoned Stewart giving her acting lessons on the art of the quadruple take, the Internet's collective head caught a contact high. The powerful hit lasted throughout the year as Reddit and its kind obsessed over all things Stewart. From the serious (Stewart speaking about his own experiences with domestic violence) to the silly (him climbing into a bathtub dressed as a lobster), the former captain of the Star Trek Enterprise was sailing nothing but the good ship Awesome in 2013. METRO

Patrick Stewart, here with Ian McKellen, showed us a side of him we'd never seen before.
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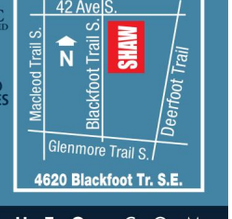

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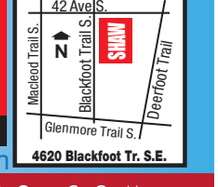

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Metro's turn-up and tune-out in 2013

GETTY IMAGES

Metro's picks

Metro's picks for top five songs

- **1.** Get Lucky, by Daft Punk
- **2.** Reflektor and Afterlife, by Arcade Fire
- **3.** Black Skinhead, by Kanye West
- **4.** Royals, by Lorde
- **5.** Thrift Shop, by Macklemore and Ryan Lewis

No lines blurred in this selection

As a shameless Jay Z super fan, I want to say 2013's top song was Holy Grail featuring Justin Timberlake. But even I can't deny this year belonged to Blurred Lines by Robin Thicke featuring Pharrell Williams and T.I. A simplistic hook and its blend of R&B and pop helped the infectious Blurred Lines hold top spot on charts around the world. It also created its share of controversy (think music video with prancing topless supermodels and Thicke preemptively suing Marvin Gaye's family). Love it or hate it, at some point (maybe in a drunken stupor if you're a certain mayor) you likely caught yourself singing, "OK, now he was close, tried to domesticate ya..." IZABELA SZYDLO, METRO

Metro picks

Song of the Year: Royals by Lorde

SOUND CHECK
Alan Cross
scene@metronews.ca

Talk about a song with universal appeal! What began as a track marketed to the alternative set has become the biggest cross-format hit in years.

This is largely due to what was left out of Royals. It would have been so easy (and tempting!) to mess up the song by over-producing it. Instead, there's an elegant simplicity to everything: an understated rhythm track and the barest hint of a bass line. Lorde's vocals do the rest. The song doesn't even contain a bridge. This is brilliant songwriting, an excellent performance and perfect production, all wrapped in one great song.

Crossover appeal lands Lorde at the top of Alan Cross's list. HANDOUT

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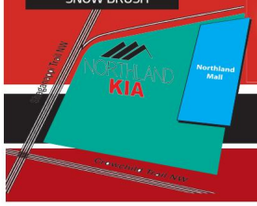

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The Power to Surprise

A baby by any other name...

Traditional vs plain old weird. Some of the most popular names of the year came, not surprisingly, from celebrities

IT'S ALL RELATIVE
Kathy Buckworth
Kathybuckworth.com

Every year, the most popular baby names list is announced, and I think most parents prefer not to see their child's name turn up there.

It might be because they want to "own" that name and be individual, or they are thinking about confusion in the classroom in later years.

I personally know about 117 Jennifers, clearly a No. 1 name in the '70s.

While I didn't name my kids to stand out, I didn't specifically choose names I hoped would be super popular either.

I'm a Kathy; growing up in the '60s and '70s there were always more than a few of us, even if some of them spelled it incorrectly with a "C."

As for my husband, I think every second guy my age that I know has his name (Steve), including my own brother.

Steve has also been the name of choice for a monkey in both the movie Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs, as well as in the Spot the Dog books, and even the titular hedge in the movie Over the Hedge.

My kids giggle at the thought of a newborn baby named Steve. "This is my new baby, STEVE." (Come on, that's funny.)

The top names in Canada for 2013 this year are Emma and Carter, according to Canadian Living Magazine.

Parents who have chosen these names will be well advised to order labels with their last initial tacked on, speaking from experience.

I don't see any real surprises in the list (see fact box). While we run across the occasional unusual name, Canadians are fairly traditionalist.

Celebrities are scorned when they use unusual names (Apple, Blue Ivy, and Moon Unit) and lauded when they go with traditional names.

Two of the most famous babies born this year were William and Catherine's Prince George (which makes Canadians giggle, particularly those in northern B.C.), and Kim and Kanye's new reality production, North.

I wish others had followed the pseudo-metaphor of the name and phrase North West.

Halle Berry couldn't have gone with either Straw or Blue?

It would have killed Toni Braxton to go with Hicks? (Only new moms will appreciate that one.)

For the record, my kids are Victoria, Alexander, Bridget and Nicholas. Not that Penny Buckworth wouldn't have been fun.

Canadians stuck with fairly traditional baby names this year, with Carter and Emma topping the lists. ISTOCK

Kanye and Kim surprised the world when they named their baby girl North West. GETTY

Top names of 2013

According to Canadian Living magazine, these were the top names for boys and girls this year.

Boys
1. Carter
2. Christopher
3. Hunter
4. Joseph
5. Joshua

Girls
1. Emma
2. Hailey
3. Isabella
4. Jada
5. Matilda

Twitter

What would you say is the career buzzword of 2013?

Our Canadian career resource comrades at TalentEgg.ca asked the Twitter world what they thought were some of the most frequently used terms in the professional sphere this year. What do did you hear the most when you stepped into your office or went on a job hunt?

@#QuestionoftheDay: We think it's guru — but what about you? What's your buzzword of the year?

@janetrodas
@TalentEgg #QuestionoftheDay It would have to be EVO: Employee Value Offering

@ERACCareersTO
@TalentEgg I agree with Guru. Learning is always more fun with a great teacher who is a master of their craft! #Mentorship #ERAC #Careers

@Shannon4RBC
@TalentEgg Besides @RBC4Students I would have to say #motivation. 2013 has been a year of setting goals to succeed!

@Farah4RBC
@TalentEgg I think the buzz word is dynamic! Nothing better than meeting a student who exudes confidence & positive energy @RBC4Students

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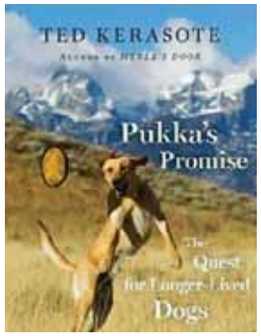
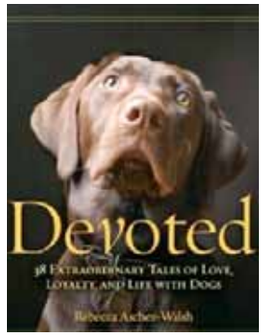
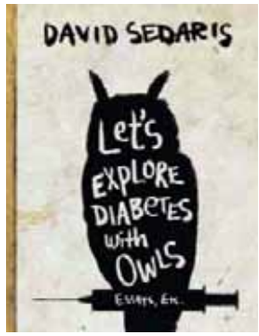
What writers were reading this year

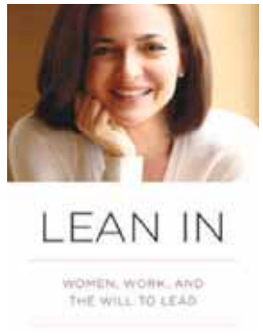
Publishing. Authors Teresa Rhyne and Emily Giffin share their top book picks of 2013

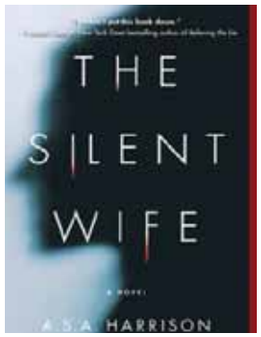
EMILY LAURENCE
Metro World News

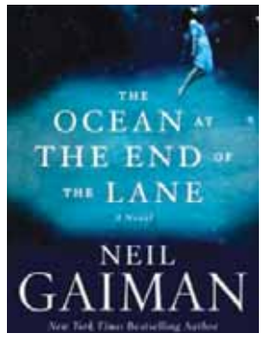


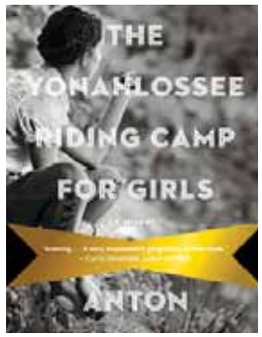












It's hard for a first-time author to surpass the bold-faced names typically seen on the New York Times best-seller lists, but that's exactly what Teresa Rhyne did with her book The Dog Lived (And So Will I). Her memoir about adopting a dog with cancer inspired millions. So, what books impacted Rhyne in 2013? She shares her top non-fiction picks below.

1. Pukka's Promise: The Quest For Longer-Lived Dogs, by Ted Kerasote
I'm a lifetime dog-lover and yet this book made me rethink how I live with my dogs and what more I can do for their health and welfare, and that was no easy task. Plus, Ted can spin a great tale (tail?) and that's not easy, either.

2. The Imperfect Environmentalist, by Sara Gilbert
This is a practical guide to clearing your body, detoxing your home and saving the Earth — without losing your mind — by actress Sara Gilbert. I've had two dogs fight cancer and I'm a cancer survivor myself, so this year I was all about detoxing our environment. This book became my go-to reference, particularly because of her Cut to the Chase Hippie: What's the Least I Need to Know advice section on every topic — perfect.

3. Devoted: 38 Extraordinary Tales of Love, Loyalty, and Life With Dogs, by Rebecca Ascher-Walsh
I'm a sucker for a beautiful dog book, and this one comes with touching stories about the many ways dogs are better than we are.

4. Let's Explore Diabetes With Owls, by David Sedaris
Because David Sedaris. Enough said.

5. Lean In, by Sheryl Sandberg
Lean In is thought-provoking, fascinating and depressing. (What have I done with my life?!) It's about as highbrow as I went in 2013.

International best-selling author Emily Giffin knows a thing or two about what makes a good page-turner. Her first book, Something Borrowed, was made into a movie starring Kate Hudson and Ginnifer Goodwin, and her subsequent five novels have been lauded both here and abroad. Giffin, whose seventh novel, The One and Only, comes out in May 2014, shares her favourite fiction books of the year with us.

1. The Silent Wife, by A.S.A. Harrison
This is a gripping, intelligent thriller about a marriage on the verge of collapse and a woman at her breaking point. It's gorgeously written and impossible to put down. A sad footnote: The author passed away just before the book's publication.

2. Sisterland, by Curtis Sittenfeld
Sisterland is a moving and complex emotional study of twin sisters born with mild ESP. Curtis Sittenfeld is one of my favorite authors. As a mother of identical twins, I found this story especially fascinating.

3. The Ocean At The End Of The Lane, by Neil Gaiman
This story is a beautiful but bewitching fairy tale of magic and memory. The novel is very unlike my usual reads, but my sister convinced me to give it a chance. She was right — it's hauntingly delicious.

4. The Yonahlossee Riding Camp For Girls by Anton DiSclafani
I have always been drawn to coming-of-age stories, and this novel is a true gem among them. Set during the Depression at an equestrian boarding school, DiSclafani's debut is that rare combination of understated elegance and explosive drama.

5. Wonder by R.J. Palacio
Wonder is about a 10-year-old boy who was born with extreme facial anomalies. I read it aloud to my three children, and it touched us all profoundly. It's not only my favorite book of the year, but also of all time — right up there with To Kill A Mockingbird.

Must-reads of the year

The Sandman's return: Enough to set a reader's heart a-flutter

JENNIFER PRITTIE
jennifer.prittie@metronews.ca

I'm a constant reader, the kind who really would opt for books over food if things ever came down to a cold hard choice. But there are few moments in publishing that can genuinely get my pulse racing. This year's return of The Sandman, the epic Neil Gaiman-written comic series that deserves every superlative ever thrown its way, qualifies as thrilling in my book-strewn world.

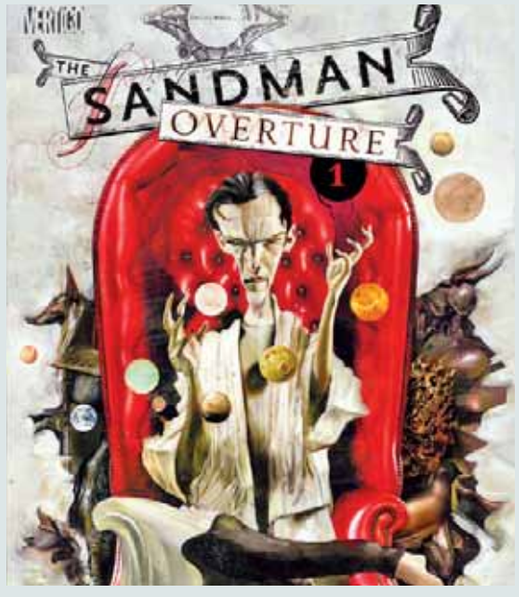
It's been 25 long years since Dream of the Endless and his coterie of astonishing siblings, plus any number of other memorable characters, first captured a level of attention that went very far beyond a traditional comic-book readership.

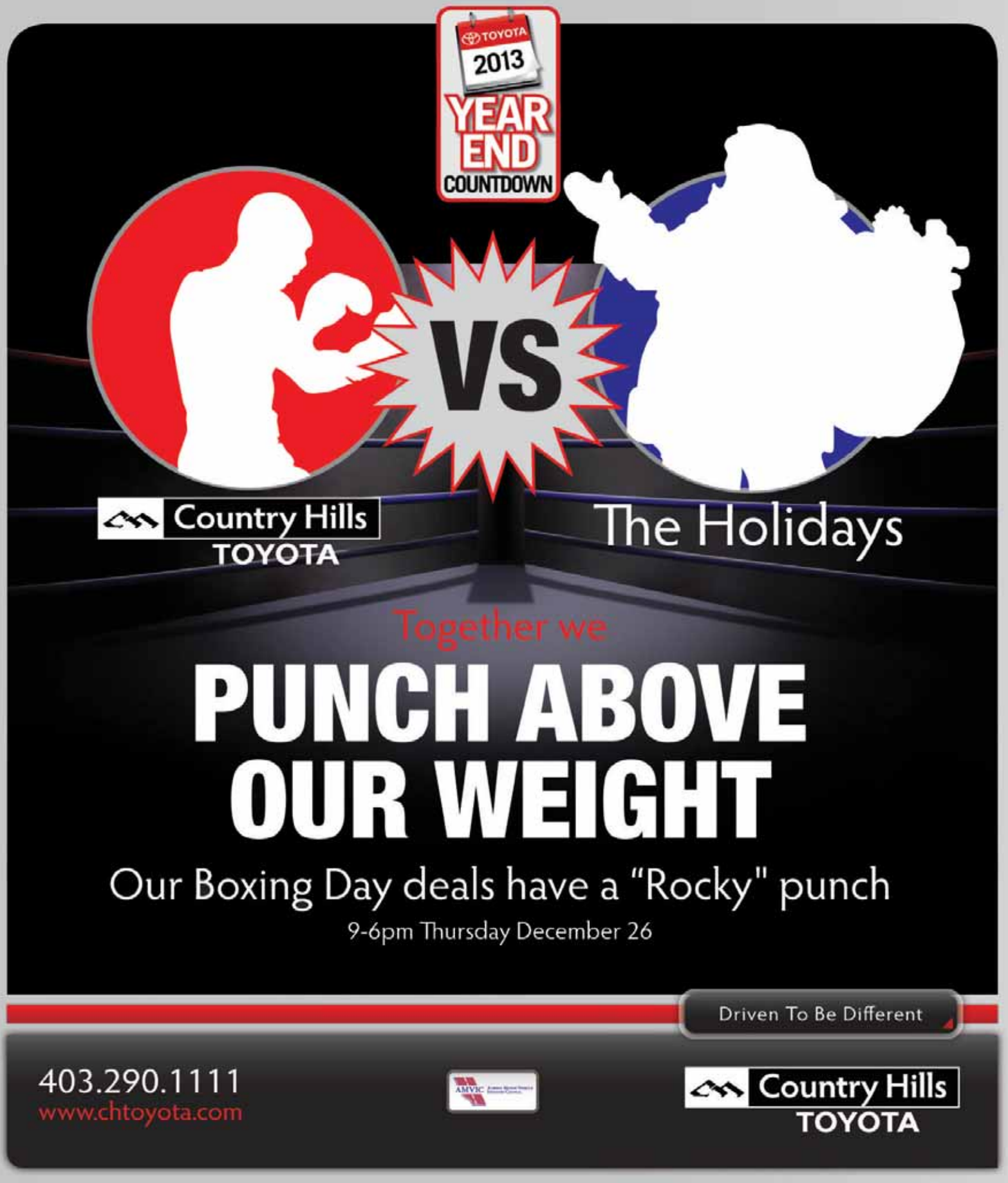
Vertigo has planned Dream's return, The Sandman: Overture, in six parts; #1 was released in October. The December one was delayed until February 2014 — not such a big deal for folks who've waited this long, I'd guess, and in the meantime they have news of a Sandman movie deal to hash over. (Though personally, the thought of a film can't top the prospect of the comics themselves. With art like that, I'm not sure what Hollywood could add visually.)

Has interest in The Sandman waned after all these years? You could judge by figures that say The Sandman Overture #1 was one of the 10 most-ordered comics of October.

But I'll go with what I saw at a Gaiman signing in Toronto this summer, where hundreds of people gladly queued for hours to get books autographed. (The event was for The Ocean at the End of the Lane, but any number of people were clutching Sandman volumes.)

Gaiman started signing at 9:30 p.m.; when I left at 1:30 a.m., he was still graciously scribbling away — and there were easily another hundred readers lined up behind me. It truly was a remarkable sight, and there just can't be many authors in the world who inspire fans to go to such lengths. I'd bet that for as long as Gaiman wants to keep Dream alive, there'll be oodles of readers hanging on his every word.

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Top headlines of Hollywood's 2013

They did what? It was a shock-and-awe year in celeb gossip, and Metro's editors never hesitated to chime in on the tabloid chatter

Love them or hate them, it was hard to get off the blinged-out, baby-making bus that was Kimye this year. GETTY IMAGES

Pop culture gets a bad rap, according to Metro's gossip editor, Dorothy Robinson. Sure, it's lowbrow (especially when Miley Cyrus decides to take her clothes off with no deference to taste or talent) and it births fame-hungry monsters (Kimye, you are a creation even Walter Winchell couldn't dream up). Yet, the hijinks and disasters of people who fly so very high take us away from the humdrum of everyday life.

Keeping up with Miley is a nice distraction from the fact that the cable bill is due. Watching Beyonce at the Super Bowl is a reminder of what is humanly possible if you have drive, talent and a whole lot of luck. And witnessing the untimely deaths of two stars reminds us that even our little lives are ones worth living. In fact, maybe we're the lucky ones, blessed to be outside looking in — instead of the other way around.

Here is what some of our editors had to say about the year in gossip:

"I didn't put the Royal Baby on my list because I thought that fell under news. Come on: Kate Middleton should NEVER be on the same list as Miley or Kim Kardashian. And although Avril Lavigne marrying Chad Kroeger wasn't earth-shaking, it was so delightfully weird that I thought it deserved a mention." **DOROTHY ROBINSON**

Who wasn't confused by this Canadian coupling? GETTY IMAGES

Metro's picks

1. Miley Cyrus ditches her clean-cut image by twerking at the MTV awards, smoking a joint on air at the MTV Europe Awards, and working with photographer Terry Richards — and those are just some of her antics.
2. Amanda Bynes — see Liz Beddall's story to your right.
3. Kanye West and Kim Kardashian brought forth a baby and decided it would be fun to name her North.
4. Justin Beiber wreaked havoc in his neighbourhood with his driving, peed in a bucket, lost his monkey, and then had a drama-filled South American tour before heading to Australia for more of the same.
5. Angelina Jolie surprised the world by announcing she underwent a double mastectomy.

"I, for one, definitely had Beyonce winning the Super Bowl on my list. Nothing can stop her, not even a blackout. I don't even remember who actually played. All I remember is the Destiny's Child reunion and Beyonce's black lace body suit. She wins." **EMILY LAURENCE**

"I can't find any evidence supporting the theory that Kanye has a sense of humor; I fear he is gravely serious. We mere mortals just do not understand him." **T. MICHELLE MURPHY**

I guess unlike other calculated 'Look at me! I'm no longer a Disney pop princess! I'm now a woman!' coming-out moments (see: Britney in the red pleather body suit; Christina's suggestive Genie in a Bottle), Miley's coming out seems raw and unpolished. She's going more for shock value than sex appeal. Which, honestly, is slightly refreshing. Just put the tongue away, girlfriend." **DOROTHY ROBINSON**

Amanda on our minds

Reading between the Bynes

While it seems 2013 was the year of the squeaky-clean-songtress-turned-train-wreck-tabloid-queen, there was arguably no one who was featured as consistently on Metro's Dish page as former WB sweetheart Amanda Bynes.

Multiple brushes with the law, airborn bongs, driveway fires, neon wigs and one trainwreck of a Twitter feed meant that Bynes all too often became our feature focus.

Having recently received treatment for mental illness, we hope 2014 brings Amanda some peace, health and much-needed time away from the tabloids.

LIZ BEDDALL/METRO

Amanda Bynes GETTY IMAGES

Dorothy Robinson's picks

1. Miley Cyrus' crazy year.
2. The evolution of Kimye (and the birth of baby North West).
3. Beyonce wins the Super Bowl.
4. Cory Monteith overdosing.
5. Avril Lavigne marrying Chad Kroeger.

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D-2913A • 70,000 KM
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R76852 • 46,000 KM
XLT • POWER GRP
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2012 F350 Lariat DRW

E-166A • 46,000 KM
LEATHER! SUNROOF
$346/BW

2008 Lincoln MKZ AWD

D-1202A • 70,500 KM
LEATHER • V6
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2013 F350 Lariat Crew 4x4

CD-5009 • 32,000 KM
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2009 Volkwagen ROUTAN

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DVD! NAV!
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2010 Dodge GR. CARAVAN

13744 • 98,000 KM
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13735 • 82,500 KM
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E-249A • 72,000 KM
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The five worst fitness trends of 2013 we hope don't return

Year-end review. Workouts can get boring from time to time but these ideas on how to switch things up missed the mark this year.

VAWN HIMMELSBACH
life@metronews.ca

It's not a bad idea to switch up your workout routine every now and then to challenge your muscles and stay motivated. But in the quest for new ways to do old exercises, some trends might be a tad questionable.

Backwards is just backwards.

Backwards running

Sure, running can get monotonous, but is running backwards the answer? There's a reason why people are doing it: According to a study by the U.S. National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, running backwards uses 30 per cent more energy than moving forward at the same speed. And, supposedly, it's easier on your knees. But let's face it; running backwards is an accident waiting to happen since — if it's not obvious — you can't see where you're going. Not to mention it looks ridiculous.

Boutique/hybrid yoga

If you're into yoga, there are a variety of styles to suit your personality, from ashtanga to moksha to yin. But now, you can mix those warrior poses with … hula-hoops, trampolines and martial-arts kicks. Or do yoga on a paddleboard, to disco music or even with your dog (doga). But yoga isn't about total body sculpting or getting a cardio workout — it's about quieting your mind. And it's hard to quiet your mind while doing disco moves in tree posture.

There is nothing wrong with weightlifting. But weightlifting in the heat doesn't make sense. ALL IMAGES ISTOCK PHOTOS

Extreme HIIT … for average Joes

High-intensity interval training (or HIIT) has many benefits: Bursts of vigorous exercise (think squats and burpees) followed by brief rest periods can burn calories — fast. That's why we've seen the rise of workouts like CrossFit, and the Insanity and P90X DVD series. But along with the increase in popularity of these types of workouts has come an increase in injury, from slipped disks to torn rotator cuffs. According to a recent study published by The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research, 16 per cent of CrossFit participants quit the program due to overuse or injury. At least it's good news for orthopedic surgeons.

Themed runs (that involve barbed wire)

Working out should be fun, and hey, who wouldn't be motivated to run faster when being chased by zombies? While themed workouts from Tough Mudder to colour runs (running through clouds of coloured cornstarch) can be motivating or push you to challenge your endurance, any athletic endeavor that involves wading through ice water under barbed wire or being zapped by live wires is questionable. Perhaps next we'll start seeing live wires attached to treadmills so you'll get zapped if you're not running fast enough.

Hot weightlifting

Traditional weightlifting remains one of the best ways to build muscle. But one of the latest fads takes weightlifting to a new level — pumping iron in the heat. The concept behind Bikram yoga (where the temperature in the room is cranked to 40.6 C with a humidity of 40 per cent) is now being applied to everything from barre to spinning and weightlifting classes. But according to a recent study by the American Council on Exercise, turning up the heat doesn't actually burn extra calories. You just think you are, all the while risking dehydration and even heat stroke. If you like the heat, best to stick to Bikram.

Run from this trend.

LIFE

Design darlings of 2013

Style gurus Steven Sabados and Chris Hyndman take a look back at the top home-decor trends of the past year, and find the standout themes included artful lighting, lived-in linen, warm gold and brass accents, and the rustic look of unfinished wood. For more chic decor ideas, watch Steven & Chris weekdays at 2 p.m. on CBC.

Emerald Green

Emerald green, Pantone's 2013 colour of the year, was eagerly and enthusiastically embraced by designers and consumers. From throw cushions to sofas and wall treatments, emerald green was undoubtedly this year's "it" colour. Emerald green is vibrant, radiant and lush and it's not surprising that its popularity also sparked a renewed interest in all things glam.

Gold and brass

This was the year many vintage favourites experienced a major comeback. Gold and brass, reminiscent of decades past, became a leading trend and surfaced anywhere from hardware finishes to decor accessories.

Gold flatware appeared on tabletops. Chrome no longer dominated kitchen and bathroom fixtures as gold and brass taps offered a warm metallic glow in the room. Brass and gold decor accents became increasingly sought after this year as the idea of mixing metallics grew in popularity.

You don't need to discard your existing finishes to incorporate brass and gold into your home decor, and that's a key factor in the success of this design trend.

Natural wood

Natural wood was the material of choice for many this year. Raw wood tables with no varnish or treatments went from being showroom darlings to standard household decor.

The versatility and durability of raw wood coupled with its natural patina over time make it a sensible and stylish solution for family living. The rustic look of natural unfinished wood has also been juxtaposed with cooler elements like chrome and glass in more formal areas of the home.

Lighting as art

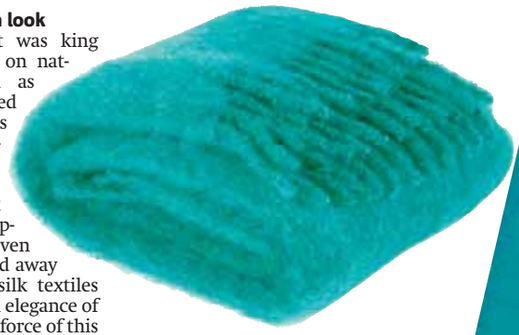
Lighting as a form of artwork became a popular concept this year. Form reigned over function for most of this year's most desired light fixtures. In 2013, lighting made a statement in the room instead of just lighting it up. Over-scale light fixtures were also a big part of this trend. Chandeliers, pendants, sconces, table lamps and floor lamps have become key extensions of a room's style and personality.

Natural wood was the material of choice for many this year, say Steven and Chris. Crate and Barrel's Big Sur Natural collection, which includes dining tables, benches and a sideboard, has a polished wax finish and emphasizes the innate character of the wood. For more details, see crateandbarrel.com. COURTESY CRATEANDBARREL.COM

Lived-in comfort: Crate and Barrel's Jeremiah Jute Back Rocker features Belgian linen. See crateandbarrel.com for details.

The lived-in look

In 2013, comfort was king with a big focus on natural fibres such as linen. The relaxed lived-in look was seen in many upholstered decor pieces such as casual wingback chairs and slip-covered sofas. Even drapery has moved away from traditional silk textiles to the more casual elegance of linen. The driving force of this trend is lifestyle and the move away from traditional formal choices to more liveable no-fuss options.



Emerald, which was Pantone's 2013 colour of the year, showed up in a wide range of decor products including this Mohair Fringe Throw, $199, from zarahome.com.

Above, hand-shaped brass Loki Bowl, $94, crateandbarrel.com; and Brass Leaf Side Table, $189 US, urbanoutfitters.com.

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I'll take a cold cerveza with that

Mexican has gone beyond the smothered-in-cheese dishes. ISTOCK

Year of Mexican food. You've been fooled long enough with cheesy dishes and store-bought salsa. Authentic Mexican is taking over — olé!

NUTRI-BITES
Theresa Albert
DHN, RNCP
myfriendinfood.com

Remember when Mexican food meant cookie cutter platters of oddly coloured white rice with a bunch of stuff covered in cheese?

You may have gotten a bowl of pre-fab corn chips and bottled salsa instead of bread as an appetizer.

Luckily, 2013 saw the rise of true Mexican food. It showed up everywhere, from the very hip food truck culture running away with the foodie heart to the top end of just about every urban menu.

Some of the foods that we can't get enough include pulled pork, fish tacos and burritos. And you really haven't lived unless you've found churros with the caramel-like dulce de leche sauce. (Don't forget the side of tequila, which was the beverage of 2013.)

Real Mexican food is wholesome, and it varies across the country from fish-based seaside to tropical fruit interiors, but they all have three things in common: corn, chili peppers and beans. The Europeans added pork, chicken and tomatoes and North Americans topped it all off with some flair.

Taco night is no longer spice from a box mixed with ground beef and corn shells, although, they are certainly retro-welcome. Think broader.

Chicken

Toss a chicken in the slow cooker with one of the many creative jars of salsa on the market and cook all day. Pull chicken from the bones and serve with tostadas, artisan corn and wheat tortillas plus toppings like frozen corn simply roasted on a cookie sheet in the oven.

Cole Slaw

Think about a grated cole slaw mix instead of shredded lettuce. Top with cocoa nibs, any manner of chopped chilies and any combo of fresh herbs. Serve with fresh lime juice and soda water with muddled mint (go ahead add some tequila!)

Pulled Pork

Pulled pork couldn't be easier. The low and slow oven versions create the best melt in your mouth recipes. Sauce options run the gamut from barbecue sauce to the chocolate and chili based mole sauce. This one pot wonder is the best crowd pleaser to come out of this Mexican trend. Pork shoulder or arm is an affordable (if fatty) cut that can't be ruined as long as you keep the oven temperature below 300 and the time at least an hour per pound.

Churro Dip

Since churros are hard to find, must be fresh and deep frying is a pain (not to mention crazy unhealthy!)

Why not go with the classic churro dip: dulce de leche and forgo the donut? This sweet milk caramel sauce can be now purchased jarred but the quickie cheater recipe using only sweetened, condensed milk is ridiculously easy. Use it to drizzle onto vanilla pudding, fresh fruit or chocolate cookies and you are right on the Mexican trend. Which will, by the way, continue for a few more years... **THERESA ALBERT IS A FOOD COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST AND TORONTO PERSONAL NUTRITIONIST. SHE IS @THERESAALBERT ON TWITTER AND FOUND DAILY AT WWW.MYFRIENDINFOOD.COM**

Wine of the Year

2011 Vintage Port

LIQUID ASSETS
Peter Rockwell
@therealwineguy
liquidassets@eastlink.ca

"I'm loading up on 2011 Vintage Port," says Peter Rockwell, Metro's expert for all things liquid. "Considered one of the best years in decades; all the big houses released a version this year. Dow's 2011 ($79.49) is spectacular; and will age well into 2063."

2013 styles with staying power

Looks that will last. Thank the higher powers of haute couture for these five crazes that are willing to commit

LIZ BEDDALL
Metro World News

Every year a handful of trends take hold of our lives, clutching to our closets with haste and hitting the bargain bin just as quickly. This year saw plenty of questionable clothing choices sashay down the streets, but among them were a few wardrobe wins that we guarantee won't be disappearing once the winter flurries die down. Here are five fabulous looks of 2013 that Metro knows you'll still find in the new year.

H&M Ballet pumps, $29.95
hm.com

Banana Republic leopard-jacquard fit and flare dress, $160
bananarepublic.ca

Animal prints

Box clutches

Swarovski Star Evening Bag in silver, $650
swarovski.com

GUESS black- and gold-tone Minaudiere, $50
guess.ca

LOFT Gilded-lace-yoke sleeveless dress, $89.50
loft.com

Joe Fresh embellished collar silk shirt, $59
joefresh.com

Embellished collars

Rose gold

Hillberg & Berk gemstone bracelet, $240
hillbergandberk.com

Michael Kors watch, $235
watchit.ca

Gap medium wash destroyed BF jean, $59.95
gapcanada.ca

Joe Fresh Washed Denim Shirt, $29
joefresh.com

Distressed denim

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FRI/SAT DEC 27/28 9AM-6PM

MON DEC 30 9AM-9PM

NEW YEAR'S EVE DEC 31 9AM-4PM

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Travel stories that made the map this year

For better or worse, here are three travel stories that made their mark in 2013. From New York City's towers, to Turkey's eastern promises, to the 'Triumph' of cruise lines in the wake of bad news, these tales stood out and made the world take notice.

ON THE MOVE
Loren Christie
life@metronews.ca

New York City

The city of skyscrapers hit a new and moving milestone this past May when the spire was placed atop of One World Trade Center, making it the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere. Located where the Twin Towers stood prior to the 9/11 attacks, the spire reaches a symbolic height of 1,776 feet (541 m) in reference to the year of American independence. This city is constantly pushing the envelope; whether it is the on-going development of the High Line, the elevated urban park that now snakes its way through five kilometres of Manhattan's West Side, or the incredible Sleep No More film noir meets haunted house interactive theatre performance at the McKittrick Hotel.

Turkey

Turkey has become a solid alternative for travellers looking for culture and sun in the wake of troubles in the Middle East. Despite incidents that have resulted in the country receiving international travel warnings of its own, Turkey is set to bring in a record $30 billion in tourism revenue in 2013. In the southern coastal city of Antalya, ground was recently broken for the Gazipaşa Airport, which is set to serve at least 1.5 million tourists after the completion of the new track and terminal building. Top Canadian adventure company G Adventures alone has reported a 42 per cent increase year-on-year for travellers to Turkey and has introduced four new Turkish trips for 2014.

The cruise ship

In February, the disabled Carnival Triumph drifted through the Gulf of Mexico for five days carrying more than 4,000 passengers, who complained of food shortages and sleeping on overcrowded decks. Three other Carnival ships, Dream, Legend and Elation, all reported technical issues within two months of the Triumph debacle. Yet, cruising continued to be the fastest growing segment of the travel industry. Ocean liners like the Royal Princess and Norwegian Breakaway were newly christened and more than 15 new river cruise ships from companies began plying the European waterways in 2013. It seems no amount of bad press can sink destination cruise ship.

The Best of 2013

METRO'S DRIVE SECTION WRITERS PICK THEIR FAVOURITE VEHICLES OF THE YEAR

Best sports car — Ford Focus ST

This year has been a hot one for the sports car scene in Canada — but one model stands out strongly for its fun-to-drive factor, attainability, fuel efficiency and everyday usability. My pick? The Ford Focus ST. Look for 240 turbocharged horsepower, among the most entertaining handling dynamics you'll find in a front-drive car, great real-world fuel mileage and the flexibility of Focus's hatchback body. Stand-out looks and high-tech, highly-relevant features round out this package, which starts from $26,499. If you're after highly accessible performance thrills available for use 365 days a year, this one's tough to beat. **JUSTIN PRITCHARD**

Best sedan/hatchback — Mazda3

There are a lot of great cars in the mid-priced category, but for me, the Mazda3 stands at the top. It's available as a sedan or hatchback, ranging from $15,995 to $26,885. Both of its available four-cylinder engines work really well, there's a 2.0-litre that's more than enough for everyday driving, and a 184-horsepower, 2.5-litre four-cylinder in the GT model if you want to have a bit more fun. "Fun" is the key word here: this segment can be stodgy, but the Mazda3 is a lightweight, sharp-handling car that gives you a sporty driving feel that's combined with excellent fuel efficiency. **JIL MCINTOSH**

Best truck/SUV — Jeep Cherokee

Jeep fundamentalists don't like the all-new Jeep Cherokee. They don't like how such an iconic American brand could make a vehicle based on the Dodge Dart, which has Fiat's Italian fingerprints all over its engineering documents. They also don't like the idea of a Jeep that isn't a full-on mountain goat. But everyone else is going to love the Jeep Cherokee. It's a distinctive and dandy compact crossover, and it shows what can be done if you're open-minded. It successfully blends traditional and modern design elements, new-think 4x4 technologies, and global engineering into a Jeep narrative. It's my vote for best new truck, SUV or crossover that showed up in 2013. **MIKE GOETZ**

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Sports Flames finally undergo rebuild after years of denial, but a real winner is still years away. At least we've still got Jon Cornish.

Jarome Iginla signed with the Bruins last off-season after the Flames traded him to the Penguins the previous season.
BRUCE BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES

Iginla 'gave us something much more' than his play

End of an era. Calgary lost more than its Flames captain in 2013

BRYAN WEISMILLER
bryan.weismiller@metronews.ca

When Jarome Iginla played for the Calgary Flames, even his team's staunchest rivals struggled to dislike No. 12.

Edmonton Oilers fans were keen to label Iginla a hometown kid. And he further endeared himself to the nation by assisting on Team Canada's golden goal at the Vancouver Olympics in 2010.

In one of Calgary's biggest stories of 2013, the Flames' all-time leading scorer waived a no-trade clause to be dealt away from the city he'd called home for 16 seasons.

So what would the same fandom think when Iggy left town? And for an American squad nonetheless.

As it turns out, Calgary welcomed back its favourite son with open arms. Iginla received a standing ovation before the game and got multiple curtain calls after the final buzzer sounded.

Why we loved Iggy

So why was the Dec. 10 homecoming such a lovefest?

Flames booster Jason Olynyk shared his take as one of the thousands of fans who attended the game.

"He was the premier captain, he was high-class," Olynyk said. "In all the interviews, I never heard him say anything bad about anybody."

He recalled Iginla being genuine when they met in-person during charity poker games.

"He was an awesome gentlemen," Olynyk said. "So good job to his mom and dad."

The giving side

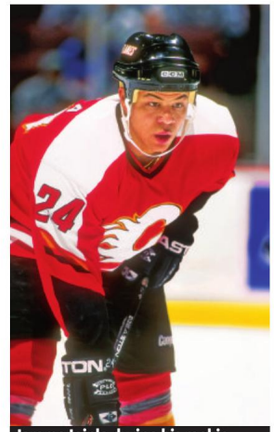
Indeed, Iggy was known to be a pillar in the community.

The veteran winger donated cash for each goal he scored to non-profit KidSport Calgary — upwards of $700,000 since 2000.

"The money is great but Jarome gave us something much more," said Mark Kosak, KidSport Canada's local executive director. "He gave our charity credibility and a profile that we couldn't have hoped to get in virtually any other way."

While the donations have since stopped, the Flames continue to pitch in and Kosak was eager for the superstar to step up.

"They are big shoes to fill," he said.



Jarome Iginla during his rookie season with the Flames in October 1996. GETTY IMAGES FILE

Jarome Iginla after his trade to the Penguins last spring.
GETTY IMAGES FILE

4 SPORTS

After a stellar opening season, Sean Monahan, along with fellow rookie Sven Baertschi, could be one of the Flames' key building blocks moving forward. JIM MCISAAC/GETTY IMAGES

Flickering Flames see a bright future

THE HOCKEY NEWS
Rory Boylen
calgary@metronews.ca

Let's be honest: 2013 wasn't ever going to be a banner year for the Calgary Flames.

This was the beginning of the post-Jerome Iginla era, where the team started with almost nothing and headed down a long road of transition.

It was always going to be a bumpy ride, but at times management didn't do itself any favours to help make the year go any smoother.

There was, of course, the Ryan O'Reilly blunder. You remember this episode. GM Jay Feaster offered the Avalanche holdout an inflated two-year, $10-million offer sheet, which Colorado promptly matched. But even if the Avs hadn't matched, O'Reilly would have had to pass through waivers before joining the Flames since he played two games in the Kontinental Hockey League. He wouldn't have even made it to Calgary.

Then there were the inevitable trades of Jay Bouwmeester and Iginla, two guys management moved after their trade values had depreciated.

The returns were a couple of draft picks and middling prospects — nothing to encourage anyone that a rebuild would be any quicker or easier.

It was because of these failures in asset management that brand-new president of hockey operations Brian Burke fired Feaster and his assistant, John Weisbrod, at the end of the year.

The Flames needed to jump out ahead of their decline but waited too long to accept it as reality, which in turn has slowed down a rebound.

But it hasn't been all doom and gloom for the Flames. Coach Bob Hartley, hired in May 2012 — though he didn't coach his first game until January — has done well to pull out inspired efforts from a lineup that has to understand its low standing in the league. He's been able to get more out of this patchwork lineup than the rival Oilers have out of one that's supposed to be much further down the rebuild path.

Sven Baertschi and Sean Monahan have certainly had their moments in the NHL, Morgan Klimchuk continues to be a dynamic scorer in the Western Hockey League, and Max Reinhart has been productive in his second pro season with AHL Abbotsford. But the best prospect pickups are still to come for the Flames.

In sum, the Flames are who we thought they were when 2013 began. They were on a one-way path to the bottom of the standings and though they sometimes made it harder on themselves than they needed to, they are where they need to be now.

Whether that puts them back on a road to success will be determined by what happens in 2014.

Who will the new GM be and how will he fare at the draft table? How we answer those questions next December will define the Flames over the next 12 months.

Young prospects

Sven Baertschi and Sean Monahan have had their moments in the NHL, Morgan Klimchuk continues to be a dynamic scorer in the Western Hockey League, and Max Reinhart has been productive in his second pro season with AHL Abbotsford. But the best prospect pickups are still to come.

Most-searched teams

Leafs Nation rules the Google roost

Not even the heartbreak of a Game 7 meltdown and a dispiriting 5-4 overtime loss during last season's playoffs appear to have deterred Maple Leafs fans from keeping tabs on their team.

At least not according to Google Canada's 2013 zeitgeist report, which tracks trending search terms.

The Montreal Canadiens came in second, followed by the Ottawa Senators, the Edmonton Oilers and the Calgary Flames.

"We're a hockey-obsessed nation and the data totally backs it up," said Aaron Brindle of Google Canada.

Here are the teams that make up the top-10 most searched:

1. Toronto Maple Leafs
2. Montreal Canadiens
3. Ottawa Senators
4. Edmonton Oilers
5. Calgary Flames
6. Vancouver Canucks
7. Winnipeg Jets
8. Saskatchewan Roughriders
9. Toronto Raptors
10. Hamilton Tiger-Cats

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

The past year has produced several highs and many lows for Canadian teams and athletes. The following storylines grabbed our attention above all the others.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

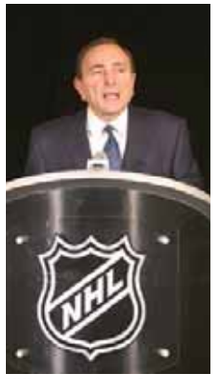
1 The end of the NHL lockout

Hockey fans rejoiced when the NHL and the NHL Players' Association reached a tentative deal to end the lockout in the early hours of Jan. 6.

The agreement was ratified by the board of governors three days later.

Just over five months later, the Chicago Blackhawks won their second Stanley Cup in four years.

Then in November, the league signed a massive new television deal with Rogers Communications worth $5.2 billion over 12 years.



NHL commissioner Gary Bettman apologized for the tardy start of the season. GETTY IMAGES

2 A season of disappointment

The Toronto Blue Jays came into 2013 as World Series favourites after a blockbuster off-season that included a 12-player megadeal with the Florida Marlins and the acquisition of reigning National League Cy Young winner R.A. Dickey.

But, though the city initially buzzed at the thought of meaningful September baseball for the first time since the team's championship years in 1992 and 1993, the campaign was a bust.

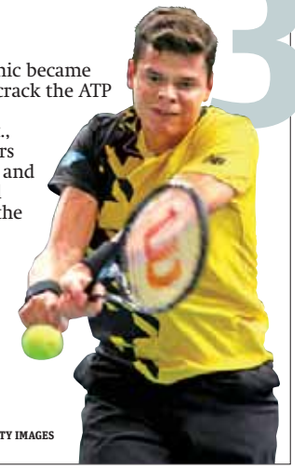
Brett Lawrie TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

3 Raonic's rise

Tennis star Milos Raonic became the first Canadian to crack the ATP top-10 list.

The Thornhill, Ont., player made the Rogers Cup final in Montreal and was also instrumental in leading Canada to the Davis Cup semifinals.

Also making big gains on the court in 2013 were Vancouver's Vasek Pospisil and Montreal's Eugenie Bouchard, who both shot up the rankings.



Milos Raonic GETTY IMAGES

4 CFL double for Cornish

Calgary Stampeders running back Jon Cornish became the first Canadian in 35 years to win the CFL's most outstanding player award.

Cornish, who was also named the league's top Canadian for the second straight year, is the first Canuck to be named CFL MVP since Ottawa Rough Riders tight end Tony Gabriel in 1978.

Cornish finished the 2013 season with 1,813 yards rushing and 12 touchdowns.

Jon Cornish went on to win the 2013 Lou Marsh award as Canada's top athlete. THE CANADIAN PRESS

The top 8 sports stories of the year

5 Green crush

The Saskatchewan Roughriders became the third straight Grey Cup host to win the trophy, defeating the Hamilton Tiger-Cats 45-23 on Nov. 24.

The Roughriders won the Grey Cup in Rider Nation. GETTY IMAGES

The Riders won the 101st edition of the CFL championship in front of their rabid fans at Mosaic Stadium in Regina, with Kory Sheets rushing for a Grey Cup-record 197 yards and two touchdowns to help his team to just its fourth title.

"The one thing that led us to a dominant performance was that the fans were unreal," said Riders coach Corey Chamblin. "The whole (stadium) was green."

Anthony Bennett is greeted by NBA commissioner David Stern upon being drafted. GETTY IMAGES

6 Canadian hoops history

Anthony Bennett shocked many observers on June 27 when he became the first-ever Canadian to go No. 1 at the NBA draft, selected by the Cleveland Cavaliers.

"I'm just as surprised as everybody else," the Brampton, Ont., native said

Meanwhile, Vaughan, Ont.'s Andrew Wiggins was named the top high school player in the U.S.

7 A trio of hockey stunners

- The Toronto Maple Leafs made the playoffs for the first time since 2004 and looked set to advance to the second round when the wheels fell off in spectacular fashion. Toronto led Boston 4-1 with just over 11 minutes to go in the third period of Game 7. The Bruins won 5-4 in OT.
- Ottawa's beloved captain Daniel Alfredsson bolted from the Senators after 17 seasons to sign with the Detroit Red Wings.
- The Vancouver Canucks' goalie soap opera took an unexpected turn at the NHL draft when GM Mike Gillis traded Cory Schneider — not Roberto Luongo — to the New Jersey Devils.

Daniel Alfredsson GETTY IMAGES

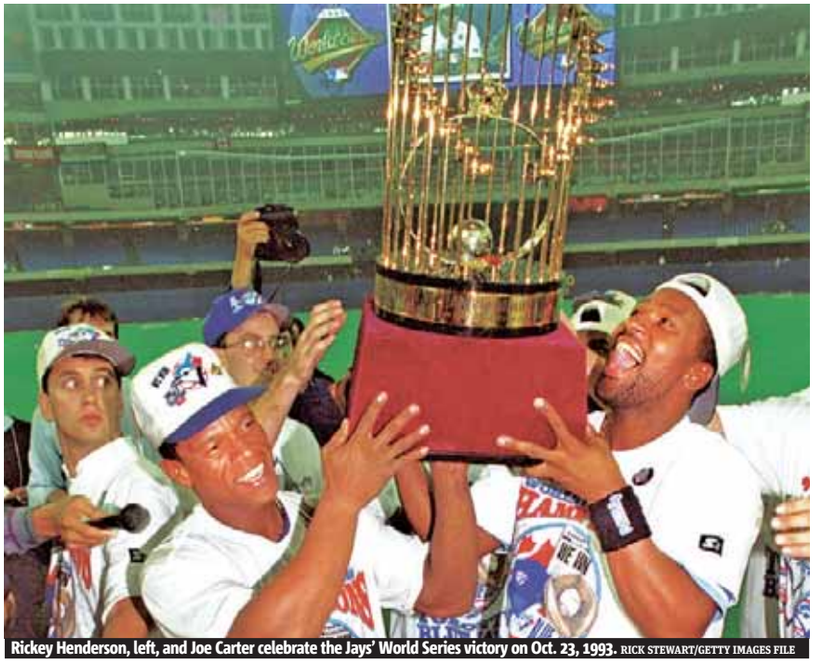
8 GSP steps away

UFC welterweight champion Georges St-Pierre successfully defended his title twice in 2013.

But after a bruising and controversial split-decision victory over Johny Hendricks on Nov. 16, the Montreal fighter hinted at retirement in a cryptic post-fight interview in the cage that included a reference to unexplained personal issues and his need to step away from the sport.

Then, on Dec. 13, St-Pierre vacated his title and announced an indefinite hiatus from the Octagon, citing the pressures of being champion.

Georges St-Pierre THE CANADIAN PRESS



Rickey Henderson, left, and Joe Carter celebrate the Jays' World Series victory on Oct. 23, 1993. RICK STEWART/GETTY IMAGES FILE

The Blue Jays and starting pitcher R.A. Dickey crumbled under the World Series-sized expectations in Toronto in 2013. HANNAH FOSLIEN/GETTY IMAGES

Answer to ending Blue Jays' playoff drought? It's Pat!

DAVE LANGFORD
dave.langford@metronews.ca

There is a wonderful piece of trivia surrounding legendary Blue Jays general manager Pat Gillick, and it goes like this.

After leading the Blue Jays to two World Series titles (1992, '93) and five division titles (1985, '89, '91, '92, '93), Gillick left the team in 1994.

And the Jays have not made the playoffs since.

In 1995, Gillick joined Baltimore as general manager and the Orioles made the playoffs in 1996 and '97. He left the team after his three-year contract ended.

The Orioles then went on a streak of 14 losing seasons before finally making the playoffs once in 2012.

Next, Gillick took his genius to Seattle where the Mariners made the playoffs in 2000 and 2001, the only time in their history they made the post-season in back-to-back seasons.

He left the team in 2003. And, yes, the Mariners have not made the playoffs since.

His next stop was Philadelphia where, as general manager, he led the Phillies to his third World Series championship. Now retired as GM, he continues to work for the Phillies as a senior advisor.

Meanwhile, the three teams he left behind have a grand total of one playoff appearance in 44 seasons.

And with the Blue Jays currently priding themselves on promotions such as Flashback Fridays, they need to bring back the most important person in their 36-year history — Lawrence Patrick David Gillick.

God knows they've tried everything else.

The team has just come off the most anticipated season since it last made the playoffs — and won the World Series — 20 years ago.

But the much-hyped 2013 was a disaster in every way.

It started with Opening Day and never let up.

April 2 was the day a truly horrendous fielding catcher with some admitted pop in his bat talked manager John Gibbons and general manager Alex Anthopoulos into letting him catch a Cy Young-winning knuckleball pitcher the Jays had acquired in the off-season.

Before a crowd of 48,847 at the Rogers Centre, catcher J.P. Arencibia allowed three passed balls — should have been four but a wonky scorer decision saved him — and the Blue Jays, with R.A. Dickey on the mound, lost 4-1 to the Cleveland Indians.

Arencibia never caught Dickey again and batted .194 on the season in which he miraculously was allowed to have 474 at bats.

Yes, there were pitching challenges and injuries all season long, with starters in and out of the lineup, and the Shuffle Off to Buffalo theme song was the team's No. 1 hit.

But the tedious season in which the Jays finished last in the five-team division was essentially lost that day in April.

The only way to turn the franchise around is to bring back the Blue Jay legend, Pat Gillick. Even at the age of 76.

The Jays' leaders in 2013

Wins: R.A. Dickey, 14
Strikeouts: Dickey, 177
Saves: Casey Janssen, 34
Batting average: Adam Lind, .288
Homers: Edwin Encarnacion, 36
RBIs: Encarnacion, 104
Hits: Encarnacion, 144

Under GM Brian Cashman, the Yankees payroll was the highest in MLB for a 15th straight season, with an average player salary of $8.17 million. MIKE STOBE/GETTY IMAGES

MLB. Boys of summer see salaries rise again in 2013

While the New York Yankees set another salary record, the Houston Astros had the lowest average in the major leagues in 14 years.

The overall big league average rose 5.4 per cent this season to a record $3.39 million, according to the annual report released last week by the Major League Baseball Players Association. The increase was the steepest since 2006.

The Yankees had the highest average for the 15th consecutive season at $8.17 million, breaking the mark of $7.66 million when they won the World Series in 2009. The Los Angeles Dodgers were second at $7.82 million.

Houston's average of $549,603 was the smallest since the 1999 Kansas City Royals at $534,460. The Miami Marlins were 29th at $830,069, down from $3.77 million in 2012, when they ranked 10th.

World Series champion Boston was fourth at $5.46 million, just behind Detroit at $5.53 million. St. Louis, which won the NL pennant, was 10th at $3.75 million.

Tampa Bay had the lowest ranking among the 10 playoff teams and was 24th at $2.13 million.

Among regulars at positions, designated hitters took over from first basemen for the highest average at $10.5 million. First basemen were next at $6.5 million, followed by starting pitchers at $6.3 million, second basemen at $5.8 million, outfielders at $5.6 million, third basemen at $5.2 million, shortstops at $4.5 million, catchers at $4.4 million and relief pitchers at $2.2 million. THE ASSOCIATE PRESS

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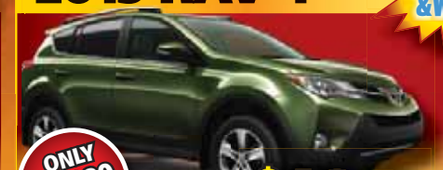

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Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
You are on the threshold of a spectacular breakthrough. Which only goes to show that when you focus on a goal and follow up on it consistently, you can be a success. But don't get too full of yourself.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You need a change of direction and the planets will see that you get it. But don't worry. You will like what the next few weeks bring your way very much indeed.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
You are who you are for a reason. If you stop wasting time fantasizing about who you would like to be and focus on doing a better job of who you are, you will soon be both successful and happy.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Your problems are not as bad as you think, so quit worrying. Cosmic activity in your opposite sign of Capricorn will bring relationship matters to a head over the weeks, but there is no need to panic. You'll survive.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
You may be tempted to change something that has worked for years, but is that a good idea? There is every possibility that you will go too far and change things in a revolutionary rather than an evolutionary way.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Play to your strengths and don't let what others are doing affect you in any way. There are some things you do better than most and those are the things you should be focusing on.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
If you have been taking a loved one for granted, this could be a tricky day. Somehow you need to convince them that your feelings are still the same but it will take more than just words.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Something important is about to happen and chances are you will enjoy it. Most likely it will have something to do with your social life, so get out into the world and smile big!

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
You may come into money over the next few days but it would be wrong to count on it to get you out of trouble. The only way you are going to improve your financial situation is to cut back on your commitments.

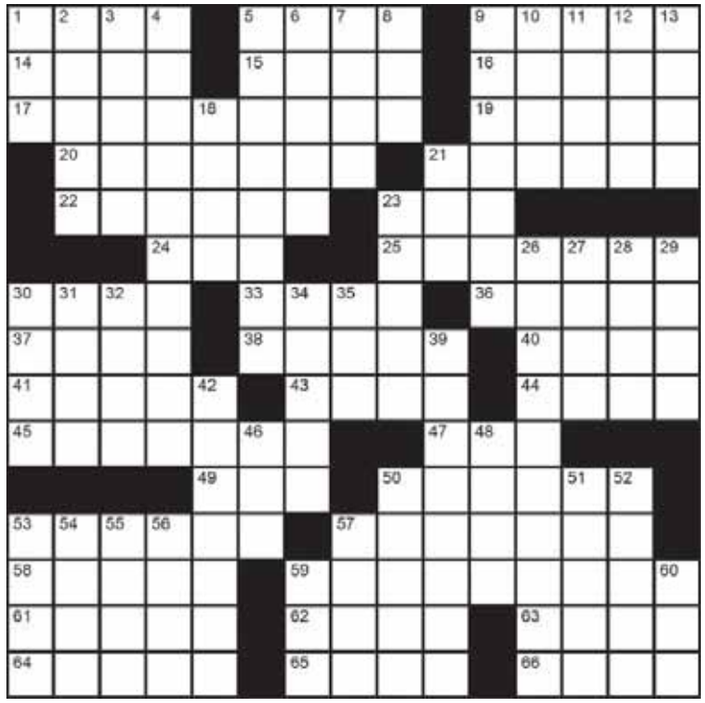
♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
As cosmic activity in your sign reaches a peak over the new year period, you'll have to deal with situations that in the past you've tried to avoid. The good news is solutions can be found, but you've got to act now.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
If your present approach to a problem is not working then clearly you need to tackle it from a different angle. Some people say you're too inflexible, too set in your ways to change. Prove them wrong.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Pay attention to what loved ones tell you over the next 24 hours because they can see something that you missed. If you listen to what they say and act on their advice, it could save you trouble. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Pasta, e.g.
5. 17th Greek letters
9. Mother-of-pearl
14. __ code
15. Nobleman
16. Once more
17. December 26th significance: 2 wds.
19. Rene of movies
20. Be drifting alone at sea ...but suddenly become joyful!: 2 wds.
21. Slightly adjusts
22. Accompaniment
23. Musical fifth note, variantly
24. Exclaimed "That hurts!", say
25. Shopping: Door-__ special
30. George Michael's '80s group!
33. Architect Mr. Saarinen
36. France's longest river
37. Rush
38. Pilotless aircraft
40. Gift Tag: To and __
41. Nimbi
43. Prince of Wales' motto, Ich __ (I Serve)
44. Dick Tracy's beloved, __ Trueheart
45. '50s TV series about a Quebec family, "La famille __"
47. Best, __-rated
49. Fee-fi-fo-__
50. North or South, in The States
53. Neil Young song: 2 wds.
57. Subscriber's extension
58. Wickerworker's willow
59. Traditional pudding of Newfoundland: 2 wds.
61. Billy Bob Thornton flick, "The Man Who __ There" (2001)
62. 'Myth' suffix
63. National Velvet author Ms. Bagnold
64. Tiffs
65. Foundation
66. Lines of travel, for short

Down
1. Taxi
2. Sprang up
3. T. __ (Some dinosaurs)
4. __-__, Quebec (Former PM Brian Mulroney's birthplace)
5. Viewed as
6. "In case you __ noticed..."
7. Toward the mouth
8. Slick
9. Arctic whale having a spiral tusk
10. Chill
11. House, in Havana
12. Board game
13. Biblical grandson
18. Sugar substitute, Sweet'_ __
21. Maple Leafs, on scoreboards
23. Elegant biscuit
26. Ski slope surface sometimes: 2 wds.
27. Contract
28. God of love in Greek mythology
29. Sleep stages, commonly
30. Gift __
31. Transport stuff
32. Prefix to 'phobia' (Fear of heights)
34. Canadian fashion designer Mr. Morali-oglu
35. French queen's mate
39. Mire
42. Attempts
46. Amusing
48. __-dokey
50. Manet painting contemporary
51. Razz
52. 1966 Michael Caine film
53. Awesomenesses!
54. Office request [acronym]
55. Marge's daughter
56. Prince Michael of __ (Queen Elizabeth's cousin)
57 Costa __
59. Taradiddle
60. Hose-using rescue units, for short

Dec. 24th's Crossword

Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

					5		4	
1	2				6	5		
	5		8			3		
	6			3	8		5	
9								7
	8		4	7			6	
		2			9		3	
		6	7				1	8
	3		2					

Dec. 24's Sudoku

3	9	1	7	8	4	2	6	5
8	2	7	5	3	6	4	1	9
5	6	4	2	9	1	3	8	7
1	7	5	3	6	2	9	4	8
6	8	9	1	4	7	5	2	3
4	3	2	9	5	8	1	7	6
2	5	8	4	7	9	6	3	1
7	1	3	6	2	5	8	9	4
9	4	6	8	1	3	7	5	2

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SALE $148

SALE $498

NIAGARA rocker recliner

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SALE $98

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SALE $98

HAMMARY chair side table

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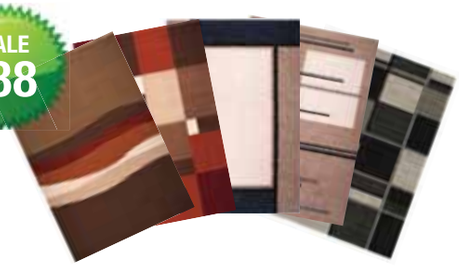

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